

CHARLOTTE ROE

Interviewed by: Charles Stuart Kennedy

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Q: Today is January 10th, 2005. This is an interview with Charlotte Roe, R-O-E. I imagine you've had all sorts of comments about Richard Roe and John Doe and Jane Roe. Do you ever get that?

ROE: Once every so often. Just recently someone who wanted to buy a harp accessory asked me, with trepidation, if I was related to the Roe in Roe versus Wade. One of my passions is playing the Irish harp. I had a silver harp ring that raises the pitch by a half-tone if you pluck the string with the ring against it. The prospective buyer was from deep Bible country in Virginia. The "Roe" handle apparently made her fear she was dealing with the devil incarnate. It reminded me what power a name can confer.

Q: Roe versus Wade. You might explain what that decision was.

ROE: That was the landmark Supreme Court decision of 1973 that overturned state and federal laws banning abortion in the U.S. Jane Roe was the fictitious name of the plaintiff, so in this context, being Roe means being pro-choice.

Q: I should mention that this interview is being done on behalf of the Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training and I'm Charles Stuart Kennedy. Can you tell me when and where you were born and talk about your family?

ROE: I was born in Pleasantville, New York in 1942 during the Second World War, in a family of seven mother, father, three sisters and our grandfather, Edward Stevens Roe, who lived with us until his death. My dad, Edward Gaynor Roe, was a patent attorney. Dad graduated from Dartmouth College and put himself through New York Law School at night. He never forgot his origins. He was a person of great compassion who hated injustice and identified with people who struggled for a living. He played the cello, had a great booming laugh, loved opera, Irish music, Rogers and Hammerstein and was a fan of Paul Robeson, with whom he once sang. He ran a small law practice on 25 West Forty-Third Street, a one-man law office in New York City that did trademark work for Chase Manhattan, Melville Shoes and other companies. His door was open for low-paying patent work on behalf of countless individual inventors. His big clients wanted him to go corporate, but he was committed to remain independent at any cost. My mother, Eloise Tarbell-

Q: How do you spell that?

ROE: T-A-R-B-E-L-L.

Q: Yes, any relation to the muckraker?

ROE: She was a distant cousin of Ida Tarbell who wrote the history of the Standard Oil company, the first of the exposés about robber barons and industrial exploitation -

Q: During the turn of the twentieth century.

ROE: Yes. Tarbell, Upton Sinclair, and other investigative journalists set the stage for the social and economic reforms of the Progressive era. My mother was raised by her grandfather, Gage Eli Tarbell, a vice president of Equitable Life Insurance Company. His father, Charles, had a small farm in Smithville Flats, New York that was started by our great-great grandfather, and Captain Eli Tarbell, who moved there from Vermont in 1816. Gage bought the land from Charles. When Gage resigned from Equitable in 1907, he modernized and expanded the homestead into a dairy farm that raised purebred Guernseys. Tarbell Farms had one of the largest Guernsey herds in the U.S. They sold milk to many restaurants in New York, among them the Waldorf Astoria and the Oyster Bar in Grand Central Station. Besides the beautiful Guernsey herd, there were Berkshire pigs, Shropshire sheep, Angora goats and many striking breeds of fowl. Tarbell cooperated with Cornell University in applied agricultural research, and employed dozens of farmers, some from Great Britain and Denmark. Tarbell was our haven. We spent every summer on that farm, surrounded by animals and lakes and open meadows. This was where my sisters and I ran wild, rode horses to our hearts' content, explored the woods and bothered the farm management. When thunder clouds piled up, nothing was better than running to the barns to cuddle with the calves in the hay. Our cousins, Sandee and Sue Tarbell, lived in the neighboring town and were great company. Our folks couldn't possibly keep up with us, so at a certain point they threw up their hands and enjoyed the summertime.

Q: Could you milk?

ROE: We were not allowed to, but I did anyway. The farm manager, Mrs. A.K. (Alice) Wightman, wore jodhpurs and tall riding boots. Her stepson, Otis Wightman, was chief herdsman and a good friend of our family. Alice ran a tight ship. She wanted us to keep our distance from the hired hands. That made us subversive. I loved hanging around old George Chapman, an Englishman, whose knowledge and love of the cows and calves awed me. Tarbell had automated milking machines and at 4 a.m. they took these off and finished milking by hand. At times I'd get up really early and try my hand. Outwitting Mrs. Wightman's boots and crop was a great thrill and probably my start as a rebel.

The farm was co-owned by my grandmother, Louise Tarbell, and her brother, whom we called Uncle Swift. Swift Tarbell owned a restaurant in downtown Princeton, N.J. called "the Balt," but he lived on the farm where he kept Palominos and Tennessee walking horses and had a wonderful collection of Western saddles. We rode his horses during the summer but eventually got our own steeds, first a pony named Teddy and later a quarter horse racer called Cyclone.

Q: Well, do you know where the Roes came from? Have you-

ROE: The Roes were Irish. On the maternal side of my father's family, Peter Riley and Mary Elizabeth Gaynor, my great grandparents, emigrated from Ireland during the potato famine. They came through Castle Garden in New York City -

Q: They had the so-called plague ships that had fever and all.

ROE: It was hard times. They survived the crossing with some small savings and dreams of getting their own place. We believe they met on the ship. After going through immigration they took off for the countryside by train and lost all their money to land swindlers. Somehow they ended up in upstate New York, in Phelps, New York, not far from Rochester. Peter Riley became a potato farmer. Their original farm is still in Phelps. The only picture I have of my great grandfather shows him holding a beautiful woven basket of potatoes and sporting a long white beard.

Q: Really long.

ROE: Only compared to today's. My father Ed identified with the Irish revolutionaries and freedom fighters of many lands. In college, I got involved in the civil rights movement and wanted to join the Freedom Rides in the South. Dad said, "You know Charlotte, the most downtrodden group and one that's still forgotten is the American Indian." Dartmouth had a program of scholarships for American Indians. Whenever he met someone of Native American heritage during his commutes to New York City and Washington, Dad would talk up Dartmouth and help them get scholarships. That was one of his passions. Before he retired, our cousin Jack Riley talked with Ed about whether or not to pursue a law career. He credits my Dad with inspiring him to do it, and he built a successful practice near the Phelps homestead.

On my mother's side we have a distant but intriguing French-Mohawk connection.

Q: Well, now, where do the Tarbells come from?

ROE: The Tarbells came from southern France near the Basque region of the Pyrenees. They were one of three Celtic tribes in the Aquitani nation in southwestern Gaul and they lived along the Adour river where there are thermal waters. The Romans called the site "Aqua Tarbellicae" and over time the central spa town became known as Dax, which still has mineral springs. The Tarbelli, as they were then called, were reportedly horsemen and horse traders. After the Romans defeated the Celts, most Tarbells immigrated north. We're told that our ancestor, Thomas Tarbell, came to Massachusetts from England or Wales on the Winthrop in 1647.

One of Thomas' sons, John Tarbell, married Mary Nurse, the daughter of Francis and Rebecca Towne Nurse. During the Salem witchcraft craze of 1692, Rebecca was accused and hung as a witch after a tumultuous trial. She was then 71, perhaps the most respected person in the community. Dozens of townspeople signed a petition on her behalf. The jury found her not guilty but was ordered to reconsider. She was granted a reprieve by the governor. The reprieve expired. The wave of revulsion over her execution eventually brought an end to those hysterical pseudo-trials. Rebecca's body was left half-buried, half-exposed on Gallows Hill. Her husband and son-in-law defied the law to row over at night and bring her to rest in the family cemetery. Rebecca Nurse's story was told in Arthur Miller's play, *The Crucible* and in many books about the tragedy. We learned about her fate growing up and couldn't forget what happens when people let intolerance and fear take over their communities. Recently I learned from my cousin Albert Tarbell that a member of his Mohawk tribe helped Rebecca's children rescue her body.

Q: So you have quite a collection of mavericks and martyrs in the family.

Roe: Yes, we have some active ancestor guides. The French-Indian war which from a Native American perspective were really the French-British or Queen Anne's war also dramatically affected the Tarbell family. This takes me to the story of how the captured Tarbell children became chiefs of the St. Regis Mohawk tribe. During the war, the nations of the Iroquois confederacy sometimes raided the colonists in an effort to replenish the young people they had lost in the conflict, which they considered was not of their making. In 1707, Caughnawaga (Mohawk) warriors carried off three of Thomas Tarbell's grandchildren Sarah, John and Zachariah, who were first cousins to Rebecca Nurse's children. The three Tarbell children survived the long walk to the Canadian border, and they were adopted into the tribe. Their family tried to get them back in vain. Later the two boys, on the verge of adulthood, visited their birthplace in Groton, Massachusetts. But they chose not to return. John Demos wrote a fascinating book about this experience called *The Unredeemed Captive*.

Q: Talking about that-

ROE: The book explored the real sagas of kidnapped children and the clash of cultures, the Puritans with their restrictive cultures vs. the Iroquois with their more open, child-friendly cultures, and what happened when families tried to get their children back, but the children instead chose to remain. The Tarbell daughter, Sarah, was eventually taken to a convent in Montreal. The boys, Zachariah and John, married the chief's daughters. Within a few years the French missionary who worked with the tribe told them, "You're causing too much trouble by staying here. Why not start your own settlement?" They went down river and their sons founded the St. Regis Mohawks. Since that time, each generation has elected a Tarbell as chief of the St. Regis, whose reservation spans the U.S. and Canada on the St. Lawrence River.

We heard slivers of the Mohawk Tarbell story growing up but never knew for sure if it was true; this was before the internet made many of these historical events easily accessible. Still, we felt a strong emotional kinship with the tribe. Reading about the Mohawk ironworkers building the skyscrapers of New York and seeing the clippings my mother kept about Tarbell chiefs, we always wondered out loud if we were related. Then one day our cousin Anne Quin Olney went to a sculpture exhibit in Michigan by Tami Tarbell, an accomplished Mohawk ceramic artist. "Quini" looked at Tami and said, "You're Tarbell. I'm Tarbell." Tami said, "Oh, you must be from the white branch of the family." So we found each other that way. I called information and located Albert, Tami's father, and visited them in Nedrow, New York. Among his many talents, Albert Tarbell is an amateur genealogist. He knows more about the Tarbell history than any in our family. Albert was a paratrooper in the Eighty-second Airborne in World War Two. He survived the Wahl river crossing, fought in the Battle of the Bulge and helped liberate one of the death camps in Germany. His portrait hangs in Syracuse community center and his combat experiences are recounted in several books. A recent one I strongly recommend, *Brave Men, Gentle Heroes*, tells several father-son tales including those of Albert and his son, Mike, who fought in the Special Forces during several tours in Vietnam. During a long, troubled post-war rehabilitation, Mike Tarbell became involved in teaching about Iroquois heritage within the public schools. He's now a curator at the Iroquois Museum in Howes Cave in upstate New York.

Q: Now, you mentioned your father went to night school at NYU. What was his father doing in the family?

ROE: Ed's father, Edward Stevens Roe, was an officer of the American Rubber Corporation. He lost his job during the Depression. "Pom Pom," as we called him, supported himself as a clerk on Wall Street and kept that job until he died, when I was eight and a half. In 1904 he had bought a house in Pleasantville, when Daddy was two years old. When I was born in 1942, Pom Pom called his son and asked him to buy his house on 19 Orchard Street because he had a tenant, an opera singer, who had a very large goose. The operatic goose was running amok, making a mess of the place, and he didn't have the heart to evict them.

My grandmother was Charlotte Gaynor Riley. A niece, Riley, and I both carry her name. Charlotte met Edward at the New York Conservatory of Music. They tied the knot in NYC in 1900. She was a professional singer and pianist who sang on cruises to Europe when she was single. Charlotte died before I was born. I inherited her Irish music books and her Steinway piano. Our grandfather was a gentle, sweet influence when we were young. He tried to bring some peace to the household, and taught us kids to ride bicycles. He showed us what strength lies in humility.

Q: You grew up in Pleasantville?

ROE: We lived there although we spent nearly every summer at Tarbell Farms.

Q: How big was your family?

ROE: There were five of us girlmy sisters Noel, Rebecca and Annand a cousin Quini who lived with us during high school. After graduating from Western College, my mother married Buck Folk, a dashing First Lieutenant and later a Colonel in the Artillery branch of the Army. This was the roaring 20's. Some of Buck's Army pals were skirt-chasers and my mother balked at the culture. After a difficult divorce, they eventually came to be on good terms. Their daughter, Noel, grew up with us and my father adopted her after marrying Eloise in 1939. Noel was six years older than my older sister, Becky. When Noel was in high school, our first cousin Anne Quin (whom we called Quini) also lived with us. We girls came in waves, and took turns inhabiting a small but magical bedroom in the attic. I imagine we were a handful to raise. We squabbled like little foxes at times. Amazingly we remain close and share many interests.

Q: Which are?

ROE: Environmental protection. Nature awareness. Endangered species. Native American culture and history. Horses, dogs, farming. Good books. Not putting up with those who abuse power. We love antiques and old things that tell stories. We cherish things that are real and made by hand, like textiles or good home cooked and ethnic food. We have certain political differences but are all drawn to international and ancestral connections. My oldest sister Noel was a ski instructor, real estate agent and bed & breakfast owner; my next older sister Becky a special education teacher, horsewoman and accountant; and the youngest, Anne is an artist, art teacher, and healevery different walks of life. All three are big-time grandmothers now. They gave me great moral support during my own troubled times and when I lived abroad.

Q: How about your mother? What were her interests?

ROE: Eloise went to Barnard College in New York for two years, and graduated from Western College for Women in Ohio. She had that rebel gene. She came to adulthood in the roaring twenties. Her mother was a real estate developer who was involved in starting the first cooperative apartments in New York City. Eloise was working at B. Altman's in New York City when she met my father. She gave that up to become a full-time mom. She wanted to have the kind of solid home her parents had never given her. During the year after her divorce Noel and Quini lived with another family in New Jersey that left some scars. Mom's mothering instincts extended to plants, relatives, neighbors, a broad spectrum. She told me her thesis at Western was about how the races should mix. Her reasoning was that if people could overcome their prejudices and biases and let the different ethnic groups mingle, we would be stronger, more diverse, and more vibrant intellectually. Her teachers looked at her and said, "Where in the world did you get these ideas?"

Her grandfather Gage Eli Tarbell and his family had been influenced by the Universalist church, which had strong roots in rural New York and was connected to the abolitionists and the Underground Railroad. Gage would tell her, "Eloise, if there's a black woman on the bus and nobody gives her a seat, if you don't give her your seat, you're no daughter of mine. If there's a black woman on the bus and nobody sits with her, if you don't sit with her, you're no daughter of mine." So she grew up with pretty advanced ideas for her time. Which I, being a typically mutinous teenager, had to grow up to appreciate. Mother didn't reveal several of these chapters of her life to us until she was into her prime. Maybe she had to wait until we could listen up better.

Eloise loved to talk. She could befriend anyone in her line of chatting. She had a phenomenal memory for family connections. Ask her how distant kin were related and she would cite bright genealogical branches from memory, with telling details and embellishments about ancestors, just like Celtic bards or African harpists used to recite centuries of clan lines in song.

Q: Now, inside the house did you sit around in the evening or dinner time and discuss matters of the world?

ROE: Only by accident. Our family table was often chaotic: sibling glares, parents who fought operatically, one sister who would secretly drop food under the table, me who ate everything like a starving prisoner. Although thanks in no small part to my mother, we did sit down together. I remember my father was an active reader. Ed loved Joseph Conrad, detective books, O. Henry novels. But his job was very intellectually demanding. He left at 4 a.m. to take the early train to NYC and was tired when he came home. So when TV was invented, he loved that way of relaxing and reconnecting with culture and current events. We used to have the TV on while we were eating dinner, which got my goat. It used to broil me that we couldn't have a conversation about "the world." The exception was at holiday time when the house was full of relatives. Those scenes were like a wacky New York version of Dylan Thomas' "Christmas in Wales."

I worked for my Dad two summers in college, and I loved getting a look at his craft. He had treated me as an adult from early on. But I didn't find out how good he was until later. He used to go to Washington and have to do all the research himself, writing by hand in the old Patent Office and being nice to the old clerks who'd bring the files out and might know where the pertinent secrets were stored. He was licensed to argue before the Supreme Court, and he never lost a case in patent court. Melville's CEO called him the "Rolls Royce of patent attorneys." For a couple of years in the 1950s, Dad partnered with another attorney, and after they went separate ways he kept the sign, "Jones and Roe." This attracted many patent-seekers from the Afro-American community, who thought from the name that he must be a "brother." Ed's heart was with the small inventors who came up with unique, often quixotic ideas to make life better. His drive came from getting them their just due. And struggling to pay our college tuitions.

Dad's younger brother, Frederick Stevens Roe (Roger) was killed in Burma in July 1944. He was a second lieutenant in the infantry during World War II. Ed never quite got over this loss. He had also tried to enlist in the army, but a serious hockey injury kept him out. That weighed on him. He spent much of his free time during the war years visiting injured soldiers in the hospitals.

My mother knit together the family strands. Eloise held our genealogy in the map of her mind and could recall the most intricate family relationships with an immediacy that still awes me. She would look after neglected parts of the flock just as she cared for stray animals. My great uncle and aunt, Leighton and Edith Rogers, lived in Greenwich, Connecticut. We visited them a lot, and they would come see us every holiday. Leighton was my first window into international service. He lived with his sister in a small, beautifully furnished apartment with oriental rugs and antiques brought back from Russia and China. I have a lacquered jade green box that he carved my initials into, and a small, well-worn, laughing wooden Buddha that carries his essence. Their apartment in Greenwich was so inviting and resonant, like an open book or a sonata.

Uncle Leighton went to work in Russia for one of the first multinational ventures when National City Bank of New York (now Citibank) opened their offices in pre-Revolutionary Russia under the czar in 1914. He graduated from Dartmouth College and was recruited to join this mission with other Dartmouth graduates who spoke not a word of Russian. They went straight from Dartmouth to Saint Petersburg in 1916. They studied Russian assiduously throughout their stay. They were culture vultures, real adventurers. Leighton's diary is a vivid chronicle of Russia in full collapse. He and his colleagues lived in the heart of the capital, near the palace. They witnessed the overthrow of the czar and the Bolshevik revolution. In Leighton's journal and his dinner table stories - he made feel you were right there on the turbulent streets of St. Petersburg, seeing Lenin and Trotsky talk, observing Rasputin, watching the starving soldiers return from the front. He and his friends went to every opera and ballet they could afford. They explored the city, took memorable side trips, and experienced the famine first hand. The Bolsheviks took over Citibank for a period of about three weeks and held them hostage. Leighton engaged the revolutionaries in heated debate. Soon after, they put Leighton's name on a hit list. The bank's home office agreed to let him leave he wanted to enlist in the U.S. army because his brother Lester had just enlisted. But getting out of Russia was a conundrum. He was granted one visa to leave Russia but couldn't get the one that was required to leave Saint Petersburg. The U.S. Consul was risk-adverse and wouldn't help him. The British understood the urgency and helped organize an escape expedition for expats including Leighton whose lives were in danger. To get aboard the train, he did an end run around the border guards in the St. Petersburg railroad station. His friends created a ruckus to distract the police, and then threw his bags over the guards' heads while he made a running jump for the train. With the rations his friends had donated, he barely survived the freezing train to Murmansk, the Russian city bordering Finland that was then controlled by the Western powers. When Leighton arrived in London, he approached the first group of officers he saw standing on the street to ask for help. To his amazement, one of them was his older brother (our grandfather) Lester, who was assigned to work with the British as an army surgeon.

Leighton enlisted and served in army intelligence for the American Expeditionary Forces in England and France in 1918 and 1919. Sometime after the war he barnstormed across the country with his cohorts, showing off the new flying machines.

Leighton published a well-received novel, *Wine of Fury*, about Americans caught up in the Russian revolution. He joined the Foreign Commercial Service, serving as trade commissioner in Warsaw and Berlin. From 1926 to 1933 he was the first CEO of the U.S. Aeronautical Society. In that capacity he went on an expedition to China. The small aircraft carrying his group went down in one of the tributaries of the Yangtze River, but the passengers survived. During World War Two he led a technical mission to Russia and advised Bell Aircraft on Russian capabilities. (John Haynes, the Library of Congress' American historian, learned during a recent trip to Siberia that the KGB had checked on Leighton's credentials prior to the Bell Aircraft mission. To their surprise, they found he wasn't a spy!) After World War II, Leighton tried to survive as a writer and consultant, but it didn't pan out. When his sister Edith, a schoolteacher died, it was a month or so too early for Leighton to receive her pension. He died in 1962 of cirrhosis of the liver. My uncle was a great raconteur. His *joie de vivre* and his vulnerability made a lasting impression. His example taught me that working as an artist will not magically put bread on the table. That voice helped me tough it out in a line of work that at times seemed diametrically opposed to my nature, or to any free spirit.

Q: Well, where did your mother and father fall politically?

ROE: Both were independent-minded. To the extent there was any political discussion at home, my mother and father would take opposing sides, on principle. My father preferred the Democrats. His instinct was for the underdog and for fair play. He was outraged by the McCarthy hysteria and the unfairness of the House Un-American Committee hearings. My mother called herself a Republican. However, the last time she voted for a Republican was for Eisenhower, because she thought the party had forgotten how to keep government out of the bedroom. She said conservatives talked about right to life but didn't care about women's health or about the rights of children who lived in hard circumstances. She was very much of a feminist and had strong opinions about most everything. She was most outraged by the religious fanatics who wanted to insert their polemics into the school system. She was allergic to Democrats, but in practice saw them as the lesser of two evils. Contradictions didn't faze her - she named Eleanor Roosevelt one of her main heroines. I remember her saying during her last days in hospice that it's well nigh time the U.S. had a woman President, and Hillary Clinton would make a fine Commander in Chief, and why not?

Q: As a child were you much of a reader?

ROE: I loved fairy tales and animal stories. I devoured books about horses, especially those written by C.W. Anderson, an artist friend of my Dad's. As a teen I read Walt Whitman, Dylan Thomas, Federica Garcia Lorca, Rilke. From Lorca and later in college reading George Orwell - I learned about the Spanish Civil War. After high school I was drawn to Anna Akhmatova, the Russian poet who died in the Russian Gulag. Albert Camus, Rachel Carson, Edna St. Vincent Millay, Hemingway, and Robert Frost were other favorites. Zen Buddhism fascinated me.

Pleasantville was an older commuter town, but it had its homely charms. The main immigrant community was Italian. I befriended the cemetery keeper, an ancient gentleman with a nearly full-length beard, who shared many stories with me. Harry Belafonte lived in the rolling hills beyond the center of town. One summer at Tarbell Farms, I found a stack of old Reader's Digest magazines in the attic. I started reading about the Holocaust and I was shocked. I felt somehow the adults had betrayed me by their silence. Why did nobody talk about it in high school? Why wasn't it part of our history studies? I was sickened that genocide could occur and have such a horrible, devastating impact on a whole continent, on all humanity. I read about the Nazis, the French Resistance movement, and other upheavals like the Soviet invasion of Hungary in 1956. Later in college I learned about the occupation and maiming of Tibet by Communist China. These tragedies felt personal to me. I vowed whatever I did with my life, I wouldn't be silent in the face of injustice. I had to be engaged.

Q: Speaking of that, in Pleasantville was there much of a Jewish community and were they accepted?

ROE: Pleasantville has a Jewish community, Usonia, that was inspired by the architecture of Franklin Lloyd Wright. My closest friend, Lucy Resnik, lived there. She was a year ahead of me in high school and we shared a love of poetry. I liked being around her folks, hearing their intense discussions about politics and seeing the candles they would light during the high holidays. I wasn't aware of any anti-Semitism in the school. I did sense discrimination toward lower-income groups and didn't like it at all. I was both insider and outsider, at one point being cheerleading captain and head of the women's basketball team. My circles were very eclectic. Another best friend from grammar school was Sheila Marvin (now Mack). We've kept in touch over the years. Sheila married a foreign service officer, Jim Mack, and briefly lived in my place in Greenwich Village after college. In high school I hung out with working-class pals, with eggheads and the usual for-fun gang of girls. When we were kids, as a treat, Dad would take the family out to the diner, which we called the "bean wagon." But later in high school he'd warn us, "don't go near the bean wagon," because the motorcycle crowd hung out there at night. So of course being in love with Jimmy Dean and-

Q: Oh sure.

ROE: I would head for the diner to see what they had to say. I was a tomboy. When I was in grade school, my older sister Becky had a group that would make up mysterious Arthurian feats in the woods, and back then we could play there all day, with nobody fretting about it. The big girls would put logs across the water and cross them, and go hide out. I followed them like a little puppy dog and tried to keep up. My father was the acting police judge of the town. Once with my local gang we broke into the village pool at night by climbing over a big fence. None of the kids told their parents that we'd gotten caught. Well, I told my parents because I knew my father would find out right away. Without deserving it, I gained a sort of rough halo that he heard from me first.

Q: How about academically, the high school and in elementary school. What sort of subjects did you cotton to or which ones weren't you happy with?

ROE: I loved music. I sang my heart out in chorus. (Later in college, I wanted to be a jazz singer.) I studied the piano, but never enjoyed recitals. My least favorite subject was home economics which girls had to take in middle school nearly flunked it. I loved art and sketching horses. I was mad about horses and all kinds of magical creatures. I conversed with unicorns. I loved literature. Among the schoolteachers that most influenced me was our French teacher, Monsieur Gabriel. I had four years of college-level French in high school. Mr. Gabriel used to tell me not to drag my feet on the floor or my mind would suffer. He was strict, with an impish sense of humor. We had term papers, and I remember more than one meltdown trying to get them done in English or in French. I liked history, not memorizing dates, but interpreting social movements and ideas. I was good at math and enjoyed it like a game, but forgot everything once I no longer studied it. At one point when I was negotiating union contracts, I had to teach myself all over again how to get fractions: divide the larger number into the smaller one. So math didn't stick, but political/cultural issues, the arts, philosophy, the fascination with social change those remained.

Q: What about college?

ROE: My sister Noel, ten years my elder, studied at Colby Jr. College, now Colby Sawyer College in New London, New Hampshire. Right after graduating she drove to California to visit our grandfather Lester Rogers. On her return she explored Colorado and stayed there permanently, living in the Rockies in Fraser, near Winter Park. She was the pioneer. Becky, my high school idol, was two and a half years older than me and she followed suit going to the University of Colorado. My mother drove me out to visit her on the Easter spring break two years before I was to go to college. Mother loved the freedom of getting in the car and driving across the country. When I saw the Rocky Mountains jutting out of the plains, it was an epiphany. I was mesmerized. I sat in on several of Becky's classes. The American lit teacher was discussing John Dos Passos and when he read the words - "While there's a working class, I am of it...While there's a soul in prison, I am not free"- I thought, this is where I'm going to study. So I applied to one college and one alone -the University of Colorado. Mom wanted me to go to one of the Seven Sister colleges. I had top grades and could have had many interesting choices. But when I met the women coming back from those colleges, they looked overdressed, stressed out, all of one mold, not like the people I'd met out West who seemed very relaxed, free, like pioneers. So I went to CU. Later my younger sister Anne also attended Colby Jr. and moved to Colorado after finishing her degree at the University of Denver. We are cowboy girls at heart.

Q: You started college around 1960, I guess. What was the University of Colorado like when you went there?

ROE: A place in ferment. Boulder was a stimulating town intellectually, socially, and sports-wise. CU was a large campus but easy to find your way around. I didn't take to dormitory life. After my first year I took a few classes in summer school, aiming to get through college early. My college roommate Alexandra McArdle (now Ogsbury) and I broke the rules by getting our own flat. The school authorities later discovered this and gave us a slap on the wrists. Alexandra and I continued as roommates in Robinson's boarding house after freshman year and we remain the closest of buddies, lifetimes later. She became a modern dancer and polarity/cranial therapist, and has moved back to Boulder to be near her daughter.

I gravitated towards two areas of study, political sociology and languages. I loved the French language, and there were some Normandy roots in my mother's family. One of her ancestors on her father's side was the John Rogers who published the first English translation of the Bible in Antwerp and was burned at the stake for heresy in 1555.

Q: Another early rebel...

ROE: Who paid dearly. France had this connection for me, and I loved the sound of Romance languages. The head of CU's French Department was a visionary professor, Pierre Delattre. He had a whole mad scientist setup in the basement with a futuristic recording studio. He taught French like music, emphasizing phonetics, tonalities, articulation. I worked in the university language lab, took graduate level French, and studied Russian and Polish which I now realize echoed my great uncle's overseas experiences. I would have majored in sociology, but the required courses struck me as boring and irrelevant in the extreme. A political sociology professor, Alex Gardner, was the center of political debate and action on campus. He was a democrat socialist, deeply immersed in the historical debates of the Mensheviks and the Bolsheviks as well as the political issues of the '60s. He took on the pro-Communist left and the right wingers. His adversaries included Edward Teller, who had opposed the nuclear test ban treaty, and those taken up with the Ayn Rand cult-

Q: I think of Ayn Rand being the cult of selfishness - you kind of do what you really want for yourself.

ROE: And forget about community. Alex Garber was the faculty guru for the Young People's Socialist League (YPSL), the youth group of the Norman Thomas Socialist Party. I gravitated to that group. I became their recording secretary. We opposed dictatorship, whether the brand was right or left-wing. We had members like Bob Martin who fought in Castro's revolution when it was idealistic. They came back and told us about life in the hills with the revolutionaries, and what happened when Castro turned against his own people. Professor Garber taught courses on Soviet society and the sociology of modern political movements. He theorized that with the emergence of the European Union the Soviet Union was doomed, because Europe with its open society would become a political-economic magnet for its neighbors to the East. He thought the model of free societies along with the popular movements building up inside the Soviet bloc would undermine the totalitarian state from within, and that soft power would bring about its demise more effectively than military confrontation. That was pretty far-sighted for the 1960s. The YPSLs were political junkies. They followed the Cuban missile crisis the way kids today follow video games. They coached other political groups on campus, including the young Republicans and others with whom we disagreed, and were shamelessly creative about raising money.

Penn Kemble was a leading light. We were comrades-in-arms, never romantically involved, although he once proposed going out with me. I wanted to stay friends instead. I looked up to Penn but was didn't share his penchant for ferocious intellectual debates. I dated Loren Jenkins, who was two years ahead of me. Loren joined the Peace Corps and went to Sierra Leone. We didn't see each other again for decades. He became a prize-winning foreign correspondent and is now senior international editor at National Public Radio. I was an awful pen-pal. But his letters from West Africa piqued my interest in international development.

On the CU campus Penn headed an underground film club. He ran avant garde films, charged admission for them and channeled the take into the YPSL slush fund. We made home brewed beer with giant tube-filling contraptions. With the beer we'd throw huge campus parties to rake in money for the cause. During the heyday of the civil rights movement, we registered people to vote both on campus and in low-income parts of Boulder. I spent my third year of college in France at the Sorbonne, eventually dropping out of classes to join the jazz scene. I had planned to stay in Paris through the summer of 1963. Then I heard about the murder of Medgar Evers, the Birmingham bombings, and Kennedy's decision to send troops to buck Bull Conner in Birmingham. With that news I returned to the U.S. in June. I attended summer school and helped organize a busload from campus to participate in the March on Washington.

Q: That was led by Martin Luther King.

ROE: Yes, I heard Dr. King deliver his "I Have a Dream" speech on the Mall. It was a stirring time. Penn had graduated a year before me and was working out of the March on Washington headquarters. He was an aide to Bayard Rustin, King's executive director for the March. The logistics coordinator was another Socialist colleague, Rachelle Horowitz, who became Political Director of the American Federation of Teachers (AFT). Years later, Rachelle married Tom Donahue, the Secretary-Treasurer of the AFL-CIO. Other members included Tom Kahn, who replaced Irving Brown as AFL-CIO International Director; Sandra Feldman, who was to become AFT President; and Paul Feldman, who edited the socialist newspaper New America.

Q: What about the Kennedy-Nixon campaign? How did you see JFK?

ROE: I thought his foreign policy approaches were visionary - his identification with national independence movements, his understanding of how poverty warps development, his outreach to Latin America, his initiatives to overcome the arms race. I can still hear his "Ich bin ein Berliner" speech. The Kennedy brothers both imprinted my life. I was skeptical about the Democratic party, but I liked their frankness, their mixture of idealism and existential realism. It was a time of great hope for change. The assassinations of Jack and Bobby Kennedy and Martin Luther King felt to me like a death in the family, a black hole. I count among my sacred places the shrine to JFK and RFK at Arlington National Cemetery, the Mall in front of the Capital where King spoke and the Lincoln Memorial with the words of the Gettysburg Address etched into the stone. The lives and sacrifice of those leaders were so closely connected.

Q: The Kennedy spirit inspired a lot of people at that time.

ROE: Oh, it did. Those who joined the Peace Corps were his happy warriors. JFK ignited the spirit of service for my generation. My political influences were very eclectic. Marx's early, less dogmatic, essays were kind of interesting, but I gravitated to pragmatists like Sidney Hook. Hook was deeply committed to democratic principles and a great educator. He once said what every government needs is a "Ministry of Irritation." His views on creative, informative journalism and education were radical for his time. Others who inspired me included Eugene Debs, Susan B. Anthony, Sojourner Truth, and closer to my time, Jane Goodall, Cesar Chavez, Dolores Huerta, Milovan Djilas, Walter Reuther, Fannie Lou Hamer, Michael Harrington and A. Philip Randolph -

Q: Of the Pullman car porters.

ROE: Yes, Randolph was the Pullman car union leader who threatened the first boycott during World War Two unless discrimination was ended against black servicemen and women. Michael Harrington wrote *The Other America*, which focused a spotlight on the issue of poverty and social injustice in the U.S. In the 1960s, the SDS (Students for a Democratic Society) was on the rise. The SDSers became archrivals. We thought they were in denial about oppressive regimes of the left. All the big issues were mirrored at the University of Colorado.

Q: Colorado being basically quite a conservative state.

ROE: At that time, it was conservatively-leaning independent, with libertarian and other fringe groups on the margins. It wasn't Berkeley. The state attracted people who loved the outdoor life. My three sisters married men who are mountain legends in their own right. I skied at times with the family, but preferred cycling and hiking and wanted to have lots of free time for politics.

Q: You mentioned support of the working class. I think of the working class looking at a bunch of college kids coming and saying, "What the hell are you doing here? Go back to your campus and we'll take care of ourselves, thank you."

ROE: No one likes outsiders telling them what to do. When you pull into a factory parking lot full of pickups, you'd better be ready to listen up. After graduating, I helped start an organization, Frontlash, which aimed to counter the backlash through political education and participation - the Goldwater campaign was emerging and right wingers were mobilizing to turn the clock back on racial equality and the New Deal. We wanted to see the impetus of the civil rights movement spur more young people to vote and help change their communities. We got students involved in reaching out to members of labor unions, minorities, and poor people who were disenfranchised because of restrictive voter registration requirements or voter apathy. "From Protest to Politics" was the name of a pamphlet written for the March on Washington by Bayard Rustin and Tom Kahn,. The idea was to hone your political know-how in local communities, working with labor unions, church and community organizations, strengthening the coalitions of conscience that fueled the civil rights movement. We focused on marginal Congressional districts where those activities could make a difference.

Q: Were these mostly Hispanic or were they black or-

ROE: In Texas Frontlash did a lot of work with Mexican-American communities, particularly in El Paso, in Corpus Christi, San Antonio. In Los Angeles, Frontlash organizers worked in black and Hispanic precincts where voting participation was lowest.

Q: Was this during your college years?

ROE: The organizing ideas started then, but Frontlash was formed a few years after my graduation. In 1965-66 I was working as the youth affairs associate of the New York Friends group, a Quaker group. I also took became National Projects Director for the U.S. Youth Council, which included College Young Democrats, Young Republicans, and other university groups. With support from the Friends, the Youth Council and the Stern Family Fund, Penn Kemble and I founded Frontlash. From 1967-74, I doubled as Executive Director and Field Director. David Jessup, who later became Associate Political Director of the AFL-CIO, was Western Coast director, and Penn chaired the Board and developed relationships with the foundation world.

Q: Going back to, your time in Paris, in 1963 you dropped out and sang in nightclubs and all that. Were you finding a comparable intellectual ferment in France?

ROE: Oh yes, among students, intellectuals, Northern Africans and other immigrant communities. A visiting professor at CU, Jean Marie Domenach, edited Esprit, a progressive Catholic journal. He invited me to his editorial shop in Paris and to meetings of his circle, which met at his home outside Paris. I wrote a few articles for Esprit about the intellectual ferment within the student and peace movements in the U.S.

I had gone to Paris without an organized program, which could never happen today. I enrolled at the Sorbonne at the *L'École Supérieure pour l'Enseignement de Français à l'Étranger*, a college for teaching French abroad. Before long I found the classes were completely alienating. I sat in cavernous halls with some monumentally boring lecturer up there talking to the air, not engaging the students in any way, no question and answer. I wanted to explore Paris on my own and explore my fantasy of being a singer. I tutored English on the side. I got to know several of the many American jazz musicians living there the bassist Willy Dixon, blues singer Memphis Slim, tenor saxophonist Johnny Griffin. I sang in taverns and busked in London. What I recall about Paris is the buzzing, evocative street life, the immigrants from China or East Africa living on shoestrings near the Left Bank, the prickly concierges, the nourishing student cafeterias, the underground museum of the Nazi resistance movement near Notre Dame cathedral, the stories each building would tell, the storefronts and cafes and evocative book stalls along the Seine. Two great cities, Paris and London - I barely scratched the surface, but they wore off on me. The social and artistic ferment was very big. Opposition to the Algerian war was building.

Q: Moving towards the '68 time. Well, the events in Berkeley, Haight-Ashbury, the beat thing and all...Did that engage you while at school or not?

ROE: I didn't do alcohol or drugs. The air was too healthy for that in Boulder. Paris is where I came closer to a Bohemian existence. But the sleazy atmosphere in nightclubs turned me away from a jazz career. Once at CU I did experiment with peyote up in the mountains.

Q: Did you have a religious experience?

ROE: Not like that. I had hallucinatory visions that were the most vivid of any in the group that night. I was the only one who didn't get sick. I saw Indian tapestries, people's eyes like pin needles of light, blades of grass becoming barking dogs. I danced and sang rock, anything that came into my head, and wondered why everyone else sat around looking morose. The next day the bounce was gone. So I said, that's the limit.

Q: Been there, done that.

ROE: The political activity was another shield. The YPSLs were eccentric freethinkers, but they were hard-working, focused on the mission at hand. They took on prominent roles in organizations and pushed me into leadership positions I wouldn't have sought on my own. The environmental movement was also starting to gain traction.

Q: Well, you graduated in 1964 from the University of Colorado. Then did then you started with the Frontlash business or-

ROE: Before graduating I signed up as secretary to the Socialist Party in New York City. I lasted six months in that job. I refused to run the mimeograph machine, knowing that if I did that, I would be stuck in that dark, grimy room - the dregs.

Q: The kiss of death.

ROE: From there I became business manager for the socialist newspaper New America. In 1966 I was Youth Affairs Consultant with the New York Friends Group, headed by Robert Gilmore. Charlie Bloomstein was Treasurer of this independent Quaker organization. The Friends supported Bayard Rustin in his many missions. Within two years Frontlash took shape, and we got short-term funding from the AFL-CIO for voter registration projects in the 1968 elections. After the elections, I returned to my job with the Friends group and became National Secretary for the Young People's Socialist League, an unpaid position. Carl Gershman, who's now Director of the National Endowment for Democracy, was then Chairman of the Social Democrats USA, the adult affiliate. One day I got a call from Lane Kirkland, Secretary-Treasurer of the AFL-CIO. He said, somewhat mysteriously, "Let's meet." I asked Penn to come with me and we met in a bar near his hotel. Kirkland knew I was involved in YPSL. He wanted to explore a partnership with Frontlash and was interested in recruiting young staff to the AFL-CIO. He recounted how he attended the Georgetown School of Foreign Service after running away at age sixteen to join the Merchant Marines. At that point, besides a successful voter drive in California, Frontlash had been active in Texas when Ralph Yarborough ran for reelection to the Senate.

Q: Well, the organizing was essentially political.

ROE: Political but non-partisan.

Q: But as a practical matter, you're working essentially with groups that were disadvantaged. Generally this would fall more in the Democratic rather than the Republican side.

ROE: Right, but we weren't working with Democratic organizations or advocating specific candidates. In most of these communities, the Democratic establishment was not that interested in opening up voter registration because while it might help them elect people to Congress, it was going to give them trouble locally. They weren't our natural allies. In Texas, we cooperated with operatives like Tyrus Fain, former Bobby Kennedy campaign leaders who had parallel efforts in the field.

Q: This was 1968.

ROE: Yes, they were supporting Senator Yarborough and Sissy Farenthold, who later ran for Governor. I came back in 1970 and trained local activists for another voter education drive in San Antonio, Corpus Christi and El Paso, Texas. Back then, citizens had to register by March in order to vote in a November election. The rules were rigged to disenfranchise the poor.

Several other projects got me started in international spheres. I represented Frontlash in a Trans-Atlantic Alliance conference organized by Georgetown University professor Roy Godard. I was Student Coordinator for an International Observation Mission that monitored elections in the Dominican Republic the year after the precipitous 1965 U.S. invasion of that country. Juan Bosch was running for President again and had put out a call for impartial observers. This was the brainchild of Al Lowenthal, a liberal anti-war activist in New York, and Penn, and the delegation included Norman Thomas, Walter Reuther, political science experts and community leaders. I worked with the Mission in Santo Domingo for three months. After the elections, I stayed on to complete the reports. The head of the DR's human rights commission, Marta Martinez, who was nominally our ally while secretly working for Balaguer, stole our key documents. I refused to leave the country until she returned them. We got them back and the observers' reports were published in book form. The 1966 mission was the first international election observation project of its kind. Ten years after that, the SDUSA sent a youth delegation to Israel that was organized by the Israeli Labor party.

Q: Let's look at the Israeli experience. What were the issues or goals?

ROE: The aim was to explore the challenges faced by the Labor Party and Israeli society. The SDUSA was a very small party but a participating member of the Socialist International, which includes all the labor parties of Europe. Israel was isolated in international fora and wanted to build support for their perspective. This was a 10-day whirlwind tour. I was impressed by the Arab-Israeli members of parliament, by the young sabras (Israeli-born citizens), soldiers and activists we met, by the history evident at every turn and the unforgettable venue Jerusalem, Ein Gedi, Masada, the shores of Galilee. It was an intact Israel, one that hadn't been eroded by decades of acting as an occupying power. There was hope for inter-ethnic reconciliation. There was hope the Israeli democratic experiment could catch on in the Middle East.

Q: Well, did you still identify with the socialist side? The socialist parties of Europe are well-established political entities. Did you find your views meshed with theirs or not?

ROE: I like what European social democrats have done on quality of life issues: a government that cares about the environment; national health insurance and daycare systems; respect for unions as economic partners; a more equitable distribution of social benefits; rural development that preserves small towns and historical architecture and landscapes. I never subscribed to the capitalist faith that the market knows all. But in foreign affairs, it struck me that our European counterparts - like the business community in general - were too accommodating towards the Soviets. Why not face human rights issues squarely instead of dining with tyrants and executioners?

Now, defining socialism was always an elusive thing for me, like a labyrinth. The factional divisions that led to Michael Harrington splitting away from SDUSA in 1972 were beyond my ken. I was always adverse to doctrinal feuds and abstract arguments. When I started working with trade unions in the field, I realized how much ideology closes you off to dialogue and to plain everyday reality. What means something to me is - what are you doing to right the wrongs you see, to heal the earth and help make life better for people and other species? It's about dignity and good stewardship and self-determination and these have no political label.

Q: I think what was saddest about the left, particularly on campuses and through some political parties including in Europe, were the excuses made for the Soviets. I mean the enormity of what the Stalinists and their allies did put them completely outside the pale. But so much of the left tried to learn to live with that.

ROE: Political correctness is always stupid. And the leftist brand you had in the 1960s and '70s was a real straightjacket. For example in the later period of the civil rights movement when the Black Power people emerged, Bayard Rustin was vilified by many for defending racial integration. During his debates against media luminaries like Stokely Carmichael, the militants booed Bayard for proposing to work non-violently within the democratic system. Imagine the thought! Bayard was a prophetic activist who brought the Gandhian philosophy and practice of non-violence to the civil rights movement. He was a key mentor to Martin Luther King, and in his later years he openly advocated gay rights. Bayard and Max Shachtman were mentors for the New York City cadre. Bayard's life was documented in a 2002 PBS film, *Brother Outsider*. Leading the first bus protests in the 1940s, he said "what we need are angelic troublemakers."

One of the radical acts I'm proudest of was being jailed for protesting the 1968 Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia, when Brezhnev crushed the Prague Spring. We wanted to raise Cain about the intervention and show the Czechs they had friends worldwide who identified with their plight. In Washington D.C., demonstrators couldn't get anywhere near the Soviet embassy. Tass News Agency in New York City was a softer target. I headed the sit-in brigade that included Helen Toth, who's now an international rep for the American Federation of Teachers. We knocked on the door and said we had a student press release to discuss. When the unsuspecting staffers let us in, we announced we were sitting in to protest the Soviet occupation of Czechoslovakia, and insisted that they run our declaration over their wire service. We started singing civil rights songs and kept up the sit-in for five hours. Finally the police came, and they very nicely said, "We'll have to arrest you. But if you leave peacefully, that won't be necessary." We said, "Well, we're sorry but we think you'll have to arrest us." The four of uall girls - spent the night in jail in a cell with the hookers. That was scary at first, but the ladies of the night respected our space. I remember dozing off on a hard bench after eating a baloney sandwich. The next day representatives from the Russian embassy came and said they were dropping the charges against us. We'd already gotten a front page article in the New York Times. That was our goal. Short of drastic social action, nobody in the press wanted to hear anything besides Vietnam. To most of the left, that was the only evil of note in the world and we thought the war shouldn't overshadow other injustices.

In June, 1987, I visited the Czechoslovakia when my sister Becky's son Landis married a young Czech skier, Ivana Valesova. They had met in Bulgaria in 1982 and again as competitors in the Sarajevo Olympic games. We went to the wedding. It was a little over a year before the Velvet Revolution, and when I told the younger members of the family I had gone to jail for a free Czechoslovakia, their eyes opened real wide. In early 1989 Miro Vales, Ivana's brother, sent me a beautiful letter recounting his role in the student protests that sparked the Velvet Revolution. During the 1987 trip, I could see that the youth of Central Eastern Europe were already involved in a silent, invisible uprising. They adored James Dean. They identified with rock and roll and retro American culture as a way of expressing their total rejection of the system. We were kindred spirits. The secret police hovering around us on that trip only heightened the connection.

Q: Well, then you were involved with AFL-CIO. How long did that last?

ROE: The first step was in 1969, when Lane Kirkland helped us put Frontlash back on the map. When I was ready to move on from Frontlash, I worked for the International Ladies Garment Workers Union as they opened a Washington office in 1974. I joined Evelyn Dubrow, their chief lobbyist, as a legislative representative. Evelyn was then in her late '60's, and coveted her position as a diva on the Hill. She wasn't big on delegating. Still, I learned a thing or two. I also worked as a consultant for Ed Carlough, the Sheet Metal Workers President, to help start a women's political action program. In 1975, Don Slaiman, Deputy Director of Organization for AFL-CIO, asked me to join that division. It wasn't what I hoped for. I badly wanted to staff the international affairs or legislative department. But AFL-CIO's priority was to counter the membership decline unions had been suffering. I was hired as field representative for the Washington D.C., Maryland, Delaware and Virginia region. A vacancy emerged in Central Ohio while I was in my six-month training and probation period. To my dismay I was shipped to Ohio, while Kevin Kistler, the son of the department director, was hired to represent the D.C. metropolitan area.

Q: You worked for them for how long?

ROE: I worked for AFL-CIO for seven years, until 1983. At first I felt like I was in exile being in Ohio, but the place and the people grew on me. I had a spread-out, mostly rural territory, and was constantly learning new skills. I leased a new car every two years. My boss was 400 miles away in Baltimore. What more could you ask? During my last year as a field representative, AFL-CIO was experimenting with grassroots lobbying. I set up breakfast meetings for union leaders to talk issues with our elected representatives. The facsimile machine, a predecessor of the slick, quick fax we know today, was just coming into use. A day before the meeting, I'd receive a long, messy fax with the talking points hard to read through the smeared ink. I worked with a large network of Central Labor Councils to inform them about AFL-CIO programs, get them engaged in political education and help them solve their community-level problems. I represented a directly affiliated union near Sandusky, Ohio. Occasionally the AFL-CIO sent me out of state on organizing campaigns.

My biggest success was advising the campaign to organize the white-collar workers in the Pittsburgh Press. During the previous decade, AFL-CIO had been defeated there in three previous elections. For six months I collaborated with the local Newspaper Guild, directly recruited organizers within the sales and clerical divisions and coached them. We won in 1979, largely due to great shop leaders and strong support from the local News Guild and the national Typographical Union (ITU). We had our own "deep throat." The Press's personnel director silently sympathized with our goals and gave us good leads. Sadly, a year after the election, Elaine Cirocco, the lead organizer and shop chair of the new bargaining unit, was brutally murdered in downtown Pittsburgh. She was killed in a mugging incident as she left the union hall one night. I wrote a poem for the ITU newspaper about Elaine. Her killing was unfathomable to me, such a loss.

Every two years the Ohio AFL-CIO, which gave me office space and secretarial support, would assign me to coordinate a congressional district in Ohio to spur get-out-the-vote campaigns and to build coalitions on political issues. My district was the 10th which spanned most of southern Ohio. Ted Strickland, a reform-minded Democrat, was running for Congress, and he kept losing but by less and less. He persevered, eventually winning after I had left Ohio and later became governor.

My main frustration was that Ohio was about as far away as you could get from the international arena. New York City is practically a world city. I had worked with dissidents from Eastern Europe and identified with their cause. At one point I took Milovan Djilas of Yugoslavia around the city. I missed that international vantage point. At one point I thought of applying for a job with the CIA - I had an interview in Cincinnati and was asked to do follow up testing in Washington. But I couldn't imagine taking on a profession I'd have to hide from my family and friends. I was in the process of getting a divorce from my second husband, Tom Mellars. I had been accepted as an M.A. candidate at Ohio State University in Columbus. Serendipitously, I got a call from my former sister-in-law, Eugenia Kemble, with whom I'd stayed in close contact as she became International Director for the AFT. She said, "Charlotte, they need a person like you in the State Department because the labor attaché for Paris has just resigned." She thought I'd be a natural because I knew French. I contacted John Warnock who then headed State's international labor division. John said, "Oh, you'd be great" after we talked and he saw my CV. He was very encouraging. Alone, I wouldn't have applied in a million years, but John walked me through. I asked, "Well, how do I study for the exam?" He said, "With your political experience, just brush up by reading Newsweek. That'll do you fine."

Q: When was this?

ROE: The end of 1981. A small window had opened for recruiting women and minority candidates for lateral entry as mid-level officers. I submitted my published articles and was given a date for the exams. In my oral test, the interview team knew a lot about my background, asked about a range of issues and subjects - how I'd handle specific duty-officer scenarios, civil rights practices in Ohio, French writers, the Marshall Plan, U.S. policy in Tunisia. I pointed out how the U.S. had been supportive of the liberation movements in Northern Africa in sharp contrast to our policies in Vietnam. I scored well and was accepted quickly, but the security clearance was so slow I never counted on anything. After eight months I made a Freedom of Information Act request and received the whole file. It reads like a book of my life from the perspective of the interviewees. I'd spoken frankly with the FBI about my experiences in the socialist movement, my wild days at CU and abroad. They talked with my farm neighbors. One had mentioned that I had brought a pie to honor a farmer down the road who had passed away. Rachelle Horowitz and other movement activists are quoted. The file is that detailed.

Q: You were coming as a labor officer, I take it.

ROE: I was a political officer although my labor experience was considered an asset. In A100 class, my advisors said to forget about going to a French-speaking country unless it was in Africa. Most of the opportunities they had for political officers were in Latin America. Still, the job that interested me was assistant labor attaché<sup>1/2</sup> in Rome, and I was about to be paneled for Rome. Then I met the labor attaché<sup>1/2</sup> who was serving in Rome. Fortunately for me, we had an instant, mutual chemical aversion. He struck me as the perfect State Department stiff. I suppose he saw me as an alien from Mars. I remember going to see Bob Gelbard, who then headed personnel for the European division, and I said, "I'm about to be paneled for Rome and I just changed my mind." He said, "Are you absolutely crazy?" I said, "Yes, I want to go to La Paz instead." He said, "La Paz is the one place in the world that I would give up Rome for." Gelbard had been a Peace Corps officer in La Paz. He said, "It's crazy, but you're doing the right thing because that's a real job and you'll be fascinated. It's one of the few places in the world that's really a foreign country." So that's what I did.

Q: Okay, well, we'll pick this up the next time when you go to La Paz. That was 1983? To round out the biography, you said you were married some time after graduating.

ROE: I married Penn Kemble four years after college. We had not gone together at CU, but our work in NYC brought us into close quarters. We lived together off and on and eventually tied the knot in 1968. We were married for six years, but our temperaments led to a distancing early on. Penn moved to Washington in 1972. We briefly reconciled then divorced in 1974. I stayed on fairly good terms with Penn and was close to his family. Why turn away from a family that becomes part of your life? A few years later Penn remarried to a delightful woman, Marie-Louise Caravatti. He became Deputy Director of USIA under President Clinton. In late 2004 Penn suffered a brain tumor and died in October 2005. Penn's friends from the movement days often met at his bedside to cheer him (and ourselves) during his last year. I played the harp, his brother Grover played guitar and we sang all the songs of the 60s and 70s. Penn somehow straddled the neo-conservative camp and those in the liberal realms. We didn't see eye to eye politically, especially about the Iraq war. His last efforts were to spur dialogue among democratic left and labor intellectuals. His death left quite a gap. Even President George W. Bush honored his passing.

Q: I remember we were going to interview him.

ROE: He would have liked that, but it was too late. In 1977 I remarried, a year after moving to Ohio for the AFL-CIO. My husband, Tom Mellars, was a Korean war veteran who headed the Glass Bottle Blowers union in Newark, Ohio. We divorced in 1983. Tom and I remained in close touch as he stayed with the farm. Tragically, he was struck with lung cancer in 1999 and died in 2001. His daughter Tami called me out of the blue one day to tell me the sad news. Tom was buried in his birthplace in Washington, Pennsylvania on September 11, not far from where United Flight 93 was brought down during the Al Qaeda attacks. Looking back, I realize that Tom made it possible for me to join the Foreign Service in 1983. I felt responsible for the horses and land, and was relieved when he wanted to keep the farm. After our separation, I moved to Columbus near Ohio State University. I was finishing my Masters and thinking about ways to reengage internationally. That's when the call came from Eugenia saying the State Department has a vacancy.

Q: I have a hard time thinking of a labor organizer on a farm with horses in Ohio and at the same time you're sitting around in bars in Sandusky. Did you have a dual life?

ROE: More like a mosaic. I always felt at ease among country people, though I'm an urban animal. Moving among different circles of friends and learning languages always came naturally to me. Living abroad was just one more step. In societies like South America, Central Europe and the Middle East, history intrudes into everything. There the typical activist has many sides writer, organizer, professor, healer, entrepreneur, politico. Our ancestors were farmers and weavers, fiddlers and thinkers. They thought nothing of it. To me, diplomacy is the capacity to take multiple perspectives into account and treat them with respect. John Keats called this negative capability. He meant the capacity to hold uncertainties, doubts, and contradictory ideas in mind without "irritably reaching after facts and reason."

So yes, I have other dimensions, and with any luck they connect up. I tried my hand at singing in cafes. Now I put that energy into performing and composing on the harp. I practiced organic farming in Ohio. The horse spirit was inside me from birth. My sisters and I felt our real home was in Chenango County, New York at Tarbell Farms. There we had a retired quarter horse racer named Cyclone that no man could ride. He was a real handful, but Eloise, who could be a good mother hen -

Q: Hovering over you.

ROE: So we thought. In the summer, though, she let us run wild. We rode on that farm from age three on. And on horses her attitude was if you fall off, you get up and get back on. I was ten when we got Cyclone. He was the same age, behaving like a high-strung stallion. Once he ran away with me down the main road to Tarbell. It terrified me. But I stayed with him that day. Cyclone was my heart's friend growing up.

At Mother's memorial service, my sister Anne told a story we'd never heard. In 1918, when she was nine, Eloise was at Tarbell with her sister Anne, mother Louise and grandfather Gage as the flu epidemic was in full force. Eloise got the flu but recovered quickly. Louise was out helping the families of others who were affected. Gage organized a Christmas party for the farm families. Many children had lost siblings to the illness or the war. It was a gloomy winter. Gage asked Eloise to ride Cherokee, a retired polo horse, up the road to invite the children. She slapped on a saddle blanket. She was too short to mount by herself, so they helped her up and she started down the icy road. Cherokee slipped on the ice and Eloise fell off. She was far from the first farmhouse, not knowing how to get back on. She put her arms around his neck and whispered in his ear, "Cherokee, please help me get back on." Cherokee lifted his leg and held it there steadily as she put her foot on it and mounted. She rode on to finish the task and everyone enjoyed the party at Tarbell, complete with gifts for every child.

When I went to Ohio, I already had a horse in the Washington area. I didn't realize I was going to be moved. I had just bought a spirited, badly treated buckskin named Noah who regained his health, and I carted him to Ohio when the AFL-CIO transferred me there. The ranch where I first boarded Noah gave me a second horse, a Saddlebred named Sailor, whose ligaments had been badly damaged in an earlier fall. He recovered fully when he got more attention and space on our farm. Once when I came home in the evening, Noah's eyes beckoned me from the field. I knew immediately from the urgency in his silence that Sailor was in trouble. I jumped on him without saddle or bridle and we galloped to the woods where Sailor was standing, soaked with sweat and fear, his hind leg trapped in hanging vines. Noah saved Sailor's life and showed me the power of animal communication.

Tom and I raised a few Herefords. His son Todd kept Berkshire hogs on the farm, and we had a big garden of tomatoes and peppers. It was like running a house with 200 bedrooms. You're never done. While I don't intend to farm again, it gave me a passion for taking care of the land. The farm started out as sixteen acres. It was thirty acres when I left. When Tom and I parted ways, he bought the farm on land contract. He kept the horses, and even adopted back two dogs - the offspring of our treasured Malamute, Nemo - that Eugenia Kemble had taken in. I visited the farm after moving to Washington, and we stayed in touch for a good while. It was sad to contemplate, but the divorce made us better friends than we had been before the separation.

Q: Well, what happened in 1983?

ROE: I was living in Columbus on my own in 1981-82. I had taken the foreign service exam on a lark. The clearance delay gave me time to finish my Masters degree and reflect. The AFL-CIO was a great job. I enjoyed working with the Ohio State AFL-CIO Federation. I felt called to work abroad. But I had my doubts about working for the government. The rise of environmental and transnational movements for democracy, the people who marched for freedom in Eastern Europe and brought colonialism to an end in Africa these were fundamental changes that impacted international relations. I doubted the government could comprehend that change in consciousness. Decades earlier, my CU mentor, Alex Garber, had predicted the Soviet Union would collapse from its own dysfunctions and the power of popular resistance. The AFL-CIO was going all out backing the Polish Solidarność (Solidarity) movement in the '80s. But the U.S. intelligence community acted like they were doomed romantics, just raging at the walls.

Q: Well, I had talked to a great many who were involved in policy or observing during this era, and almost to a person, they thought that if nothing else, police controls or something would keep the Soviet empire together. It was a terrible system as a practical matter. It didn't work very well. But the establishment idea was that people would essentially lose their willingness to challenge it.

1983 is an interesting time. Did you get the feeling when you were involved in the union movement that something essential changed when the Reagan administration took a stand against the aircraft controllers? I mean I'm not an authority on this, but it seemed that when Reagan broke that union, this began a rather straight-line decline of union power in the United States. Did you feel any of this?

ROE: Before Reagan, union membership was decreasing largely because of changes in the culture and economy of work. But starting in the 1980s, deregulation of key industries and organized hostility to unions took a bigger toll. President Reagan fundamentally changed the interpretation of national labor laws to disadvantage the unions. This had a huge impact over time. Before, if you won a union election, the company would be required to negotiate in good faith. Post-Reagan, companies could basically break labor laws with impunity, stonewall contract negotiations, and fire union organizers without fear of significant penalty by the National Labor Relations Board. Free market fundamentalism dominated the national agenda. There's the dichotomy the U.S. was promoting workplace democracy abroad especially in challenging the Soviets, but we didn't respect it at home. Now in Ohio, the unions were changing their strategy to survive. There the state AFL-CIO was stronger than the Democratic Party. They were fighting environmental contaminants in the workplace and had become the main engine in getting out the vote. This contrasted with some other states where the union movement was more politically isolated and perhaps less inclusive.

Another major change impacted me as I entered the foreign service in 1983. My mother, who was widowed in 1977, remarried that year. Her best friend from college, "Banny" Showalter, who lived in Indiana, died suddenly of a heart attack in December 1982. Banny's husband Lee had known Eloise and our family for over 50 years. The two of them started visiting, first by phone, then more frequently in person. They got married shortly after I departed for my first overseas assignment and lived a vibrant life together for the next two decades. This eased my mind when I was thousands of miles away. At Eloise's memorial service in 2001, Lee, who had the looks and manners of a Cary Grant, told how he had two wonderful wives, both college roommates, each of whom was "lots smarter than I, but I managed to bluff it through!"

Q: You came in 1983, was it? Did you go into a basic officer course, an A100 course?

ROE: Yes to both questions.

Q: I mean how did you find that? Here you've been around the block a bit and all of a sudden you're mixed up with both some kids who are just coming in right out of school, also some academic types and others. What sort of a crew was it?

ROE: It was a big stew. Some foreign service officers or FSOs were pretty green in work experience and busting out with academic credentials. Many were economists. The macro-economic classicism of Milt Friedman and his Chicago Boys were then in vogue. They tended to believe the laws of supply and demand would create their own equilibrium. They looked down on Keynesian economics, on American labor, on Europe's social and economic policies. We often sparred about that. Others came from careers as veterans, architects, teachers, attorneys, Peace Corps officers. The few CIA officers who were part of the training added to the mix of viewpoints and backgrounds. I wasn't the oldest person in the course, but -

Q: How old were you then?

ROE: I was 40.

Q: Just a kid.

ROE: A kind of late bloomer.

Q: Well, I'm speaking as somebody who is 76 years old right now.

ROE: Just shows that the good times start when you learn what's going on! The course reminded me of when I finished my master's in 1980-'81 at Ohio State University. The AFL-CIO wouldn't give me a leave of absence to do it. So I doubled down on work and study. In class, the younger ones would be dozing off or spacing out. I was engaged, because my experiences and associations made all those neurons go off. Likewise, a lot of the A-100 course was fairly stimulating. Although some of the topic protocol especially - made me think, good grief, what did I get myself into? The best parts were when desk officers came and talked about the range of issues they faced. For example, how do you fight to get attention in the Department and on Capitol Hill for a small country like Ecuador, when Washington wants to ignore everyone but the big powers or the big troublemakers?

We were sworn in as FSOs in the Ben Franklin room at State. Here we were in this elegant, antique-furnished chamber. I invited my former therapist, Leslie Hogeboom, a luminous person had helped me through my first divorce in the early 1970s. We hadn't met for a decade. When she learned I'd signed on with State she jibed, "now that's a macho institution if I ever saw one." Well, the 7th floor ceremony was followed by a reception. Halfway through the mid-career counselor, Margaret Sandler, beckoned me over and whispered, "don't say a word, but there's a rat in the corner. The building has been infested for years!" I looked and sure enough, a big grey fellow was sauntering along the wall as though he belonged there.

Q: All he needed was a bow tie. Now, when you were taking this course, did you find yourself pre-ordained to go somewhere or do something?

ROE: Initially my assignment was up for grabs. My heart was set on Europe, but the opportunities were more wide-open in Latin America and that's where I found I could mesh my background in community organizing with political reporting and diplomacy.

Q: Well, did you find a certain amount of unwillingness to accept your status? Here you as a mid-career person coming in and I think it was also at the time the State Department responded to judicial pressure to get more women in the business. So part of this mid-career program was designed to give people just like yourself with your gender or a different ethnic origin a broader opportunity in the organization. An organism like the foreign service can't help but react defensively.

ROE: There were a few sharp elbows. I didn't pay any heed. The paternalism that was present in the labor movement had immunized me. Among union leaders at the time, you could almost read the thought process taking place. It has to do with instant decision-making, intuitive decision making.

Q: The Blink I think it's called.

ROE: The blink, yes. When you came into a meeting with someone in, say, the building trades, within a couple of minutes they had made up their minds about whether you were someone who had your own power and knowledge or someone who they imagined had slept their way into that position. Once they decided you were competent, they would treat you with a lot of respect. In the State Department, the power relation was more subtle. A couple of my supervisors in the early years were oppressive, either because they were insecure, or inexperienced managers, or felt uncomfortable with someone from an activist background. I was busy with work, and so clueless about State's personnel process, I could hardly fight back. But most FSOs were fair and helpful. I liked the Latin American region because it tended to attract more adventurous types.

Q: When I do these oral histories, I see a remarkably diverse breed of cat coming up through it, particularly since the post war period. The GI bill of rights changed the face of the foreign service. The farm boy had seen Paris, and he was not going back to the farm. Veterans benefits allowed him to go up through Harvard by ability, and the old boy system started caving.

ROE: That's so true. The casting pool now looks a lot more like the U.S. as a whole. But I sensed the more vibrant life was below ambassadorial level. At that stage in life, I wanted to serve my country the best way I possibly could. I had zero interest in pushing my way to the top of the totem pole.

Q: The foreign service may have changed considerably because I've been out almost twenty years. But the male officers would have randomly associated women assigned to do a job and they'll find, "Gee they're really very good." I've seen some of my protégés go on to be ambassadors. I would probably go the extra mile on their part, because at the time the feeling was that women weren't getting as fair a shake. Then, I had two daughters. In a sense there was more of a mentoring system for women than for men.

ROE: At some levels, perhaps; at others, I have my doubts. Many new doors are open. Still, I've seen plenty of bars up along the way. I should add that of the handful of really difficult bosses I ever encountered, several were male - and several outstanding bullies were female. In my experience, good management is gender-free, but can't deny certain differences. Men are generally better at self-promotion's how they're brought up. Women tend to be naturals at networking. Now, there's a huge support system for the junior officers regardless of gender. You're on your own at mid-level. But when I came in, the labor officer network was strong. They ran yearly training programs, had good mentors at headquarters with an institutional memory on what every officer did best. My first job was both a political and labor position, and well chosen.

Q: So you went to Bolivia from when to when?

ROE: I was there from August of 1983 to July of '85. I tried to extend, but this being my first assignment, it was out of the question.

Q: Just talk about Bolivia in '83. Maybe this was an earlier time, but I imagine a bunch of miners with sticks of dynamite in their belts, and you have to be careful.

ROE: You could find that if you went looking, but under normal conditions the miners are not threatening. They're just trying to survive a tough, unforgiving environment.

Q: What was Bolivia like in '83?

ROE: From 1964 to 1989 you had nineteen presidents; thirteen of them were generals. Bolivia was the one Latin American country where the United States had actually supported a social revolution. One of the guest lecturers in the area studies course was a Cuban-American, Professor Aguilar, who gave a tour d'horizonte of revolutionary movements in Latin America. He confessed that Bolivia impressed him as a country of "lunar sadness, a land of devil masks," mitigated only by the aloof mysteries of the Indians and the solidity of the Catholic church. (I think this is because he yearned for a warm climate!) Another teacher was Ben Stephansky, who'd been Ambassador to Bolivia in the 1952-56 Paz Estenssoro government that carried out the nationalization of the mines and land reform. He termed the Bolivian revolution a "noble experiment" that needs to be followed through. He also suggested throwing away all the books and cultivating an oriental sense of intrigue. After the classes ended and before my departure, I interviewed Stephansky in his home. He gave me some fine contacts, including the Controller General, Antonio "Tony" Sanchez de Lozada and his brother, Gonzalo "Goni" Sanchez de Lozada, who was soon to become Speaker of the Congress and later President. Goni was one of the owners of COMSUR, the largest privately-owned mining operation in the country, with holdings in Peru, Argentina and Brazil.

Bolivia was unique. President Eisenhower had sent his brother, Milton Eisenhower, to advise Bolivians on the land reforms. The U.S. mounted one of the biggest aid programs in the world after the 1956 revolution. During the administration of Hern n Siles Zuazo, around a quarter of its income came from U.S. assistance. Bolivia had just emerged from 18 years of military rule and a series of bloody coups. The previous President, General Luis Garc a Meza, was connected to drug gangs and had ordered massacres in mining country. Siles Zuazo was President in the late 1950s, when he headed the conservative wing of the MNR (Movimiento Nacionalista Revolucionario). His new governing coalition had a large web of parties including the split-off leftist group of young Turks called the MIR (Movimiento Izquierda Revolucionario). Siles Zuazo's initial support base was strong but quickly evaporated as the country faced a staggering economic crisis. By 1984 inflation was running 14,000 percent.

Q: Good grief.

ROE: For payrolls, stacked bills were tied with string and bore paper seals from the bank attesting to their value. General strikes were catapulting.

Q: We're continuing with La Paz.

ROE: Bolivia was facing a foreign exchange crisis. The country carried a three billion dollar debt, which they had just stopped servicing. How to democratize in the midst of extreme scarcity and an economy gone haywire was the dilemma. Hyperinflation caused a major hike in food prices, massive hoarding, and extreme shortages of basic foodstuffs and of gasoline. President Siles Zuazo worked out a series of austerity packages or "paquetes economicos" with the IMF (International Monetary Fund). Siles Zuazo's November '83 belt-tightening program included whopping currency devaluation and more increases in food costs. The discontent triggered was so tremendous that he soon undid the measures, promised more wages to government workers and printed more money. The crisis just kept getting worse while the government's authority unraveled. I was monitoring developments in the trade union movement, the human rights community and several parties on the left including the MIR, trying to figure out how ordinary Bolivians managed to survive.

Q: Who was the Ambassador?

ROE: The Ambassador was Ed Corr, who had been Peace Corps Director in Peru and a former AID (Agency for International Development) Director. Corr was a hands-on, activist diplomat who knew every region and most major political and social actors in the country. William Walker was the Deputy Chief of Mission (DCM), an astute, hard-boiled, down-to-earth officer.

Q: I've interviewed Bill. He's quite a character. And tells a great story.

ROE: Yes, he does.

Q: He's had a great career including Latin American and the Balkans.

ROE: I understand he worked some tough assignments in Central America. He was very creative in Bolivia. Both Corr and Walker encouraged my efforts to break the ice with the COB, the Central Obrera Boliviana. Juan Lechin was the long-time leader of the COB. He headed the left wing of the MNR in during the 1950s. During Paz Estenssoro's second round as President in 1960-'64, he chose Lechin as Vice President with the promise that he would become the MNR's next candidate for President. But Lechin's political intransigence led to his expulsion from the party in 1964. By the 1980s, Lechin was still charismatic but had lost some of his radical luster. The COB was a flamboyant mixture of Trotskyites, anarchists, a small pro-Moscow Communist wing, many independents and regular down-to-earth trade unionists, particularly among the campesino and transport workers unions. The unifying motto was anti-imperialism. The swear word of the day was "fondomonetarismo," which meant anything to do with the IMF. We eventually held a meeting with Ambassador Core, DCM Walker and the COB executive board. The session had plenty of flame-throwing, but we held our own.

AFL-CIO representative Xavier Vela was assigned to re-open - after a hiatus of twenty years - a Bolivian office for AIFLD (the American Institute for Free Labor Development). I worked closely with Xavier, who later served in Chile with his wife Pilar during my next assignment. Xavier was a Latin American labor history buff and great fun to work with. I worked with several of the more moderate labor leaders. The most respected were Victor Lopez Arias, the head of the mineworkers union, and Noel Vasquez, general secretary of the COB. The situation they faced was grim, almost surreal. Runaway inflation was shredding peoples' livelihoods; teachers and many other public service workers simply weren't being paid. This radicalized many, and drove others into despair.

Q: Did this dicey situation affect your work or routines?

ROE: I never felt threatened, but friends in the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) encouraged me to practice target shooting at their firing range, and I did. I kept a .38 revolver at home. I didn't take a gun to Chile, because it never made me feel safer.

During my first year I was involved in the rescue of U.S. hostages at a tin mine in the highlands. We lived at 10,500 feet altitude and worked at 11,900 feet. An Embassy shuttle would pick us up at our residences and take us to the Embassy in downtown (I should say uptown!) La Paz. When I boarded the van one morning, the consul general told me that two U.S. mining technicians had been kidnapped in Chicote Grande, a remote altiplano mine. I volunteered to join the expedition, not knowing it was going to be an overnight trip. We ended up sleeping on a freezing floor at the neighboring mine. Before departing the Embassy, I had called Mineworkers SecGen Victor Lopez. I said we wanted to resolve the situation peacefully and asked for his cooperation. Lopez was very concerned. My hunch is he helped behind the scenes. Just before we reached our destination in the mountains, an open flatbed truck full of vigilantes with shotguns followed us to the mining camp. Our biggest challenge was convincing the local posse not to go in and cause bloodshed.

Q: And the vigilantes were going to enter the mine.

ROE: Oh yes. They wanted to take the situation into their own hands and shoot up the miners, supposedly to free the U.S. engineers and the company officers being held hostage. The police chief hastily organized this group. It was a nasty overlay to an already sticky situation. About halfway through the night, the mine owner arrived. He spoke with the miners, and told them the Yankees were across the hill; if any harm came to the hostages, the Yankees would come in. His approach that we have to work this out among us Bolivians eventually worked. By morning the miners released the hostages. Their rebellion had started in response to outside circumstances: a door-to-door weapons search by the local police had so infuriated the women that they instigated a mine takeover to protest the raid. I wrote the reporting cable. We had quite a celebration when the technicians later visited the Embassy.

Ambassador Ben Stephansky told me about the saga of Joseph Flack, who served in the turbulent period from 1946-49, during the post-war collapse of the tin market. Flack arrived as head of mission just as a popular revolution had unseated President Villarroel - a mob hauled the former dictator from his office and hung him from a lamppost in Plaza Murillo. Later a strike at the Catavi mines led to a standoff in which nine engineers including five Americans were taken hostage. The Mexican wife of one hostage thought she could free her man by browbeating the miners, but they didn't appreciate that. One American was shot through the jaw, one escaped and one was killed. So violence was often a phantom presence in mining country.

Bolivia's history is full of dark forces and tragic exploitation. But it's a beautiful country with unforgettable people. In the altiplano, the dominant ethnic group is the Aymara. In the 1950s, around 60 percent of Bolivians were monolingual - they spoke Aymara, Quechua, Guarani, Ayoreo or another of the more than 30 native dialects, not Spanish. That changed in the late '60s and '70s to where a slight majority spoke Spanish as well.

Q: Che Guevara found when he went to do his revolution up there that they didn't even speak Spanish. Not a very fertile ground.

ROE: Quite a shock, I imagine. I was called back to Bolivia a year and a half after my tour ended and explored that issue a bit more. Ironically, the COB, by channeling the miners' discontent through the political process, cushioned against the potential for violent revolution a la Che Guevara. The land reform of the 1950s also helped deflate a potentially dangerous social explosion. It dramatically increased the mobility of campesinos who for centuries had been tied to the land and its feudal owners. This in turn contributed to the growth of Santa Cruz, Bolivia's agricultural powerhouse. The other shock absorber was the traditional outlook of the indigenous communities. Their center of focus is the family and their land. In their lives the village walls are high, and government far away.

Q: Well, did you find there was much translation between your union experience and the unions in Bolivia?

ROE: Not in the usual way, but I could identify with the miners' efforts to overcome centuries of social exclusion. U.S. unions are much more structured and way less politicized than those in Bolivia. Negotiating and servicing union contracts takes up much of their energy, mainly because U.S. unions and their allies managed to win legal and social protections we now take for granted at least until recently. Back in the time of robber baron capitalism, we had our Mother Jones, we had Emma Goldman and the "Wobblies" or Industrial Workers of the World who were anarcho-syndicalists.

Q: How did you find the mine owners? Were they a different breed of cat than the U.S. Steel executives?

ROE: Very different. Two of my closer contacts, Gonzalo "Goni" Sanchez de Lozada and Ron McClean were steeped in politics and socially conscious. At the time, Sanchez de Lozada ran the mining company COMSUR. He was elected President in 1986. McClean worked for Inti Raimi, managing several open pit mines. The company was exploring more environmentally healthy means of extracting gold. McClean was elected mayor of La Paz several times. He also served as Finance Minister and Minister of Sustainable Development. In a European context, Sanchez de Lozada and McClean would be Christian Democrats or conservatives.

My love of horses opened some doors. The riding club near my home was in a place like Death Valley. It was a small ring encircled by stables, close to cathedral-like cliffs and gorges where condors flew. There was no central building or fancy infrastructure. The volunteer administrator was Gustavo Medeiros, an architect and well-known painter. During the worst economic crisis he doubled as a taxi driver. The head of the Cervecería, the Bolivian brewing company, McClean and his wife, and several other Bolivians formed the core membership. For the groom and space and renting my horse, with the fluctuating inflation rates I paid anything from ten dollars to fifty-five a month. The atmosphere was relaxed, like a small family ranch in the Rockies. The uniform was blue jeans and a sweater or warm jacket. On Saturday afternoon, a group would go riding into the badlands. All of them knew COB leader Juan Lechí personally. The conversation was witty, wide-ranging, not the usual country club drivel.

My Aymara housekeeper, Elsa, listened to the radio and followed the political score like a pro. She followed the debates, fist fights and maneuvers that went on in the Bolivian Congress as avidly as if she were watching a game of soccer. She could remember what they said in a debate and all their jokes, which were numerous. The country's parliamentary debates were publicly broadcast long before C-SPAN made those of the U.S. Congress accessible.

Q: I imagine there are different worlds. You have the lowlands, the jungles and places where coca is produced. Is Cochabamba to the south?

ROE: Cochabamba is to the east. It's a lot warmer than La Paz. Then you have Santa Cruz and the Beni, the eastern llanos, a dynamic economy, very free market and independent-minded. The southeastern tropical flatlands feature natural gas and oil, cattle ranching and other large-scale agricultural enterprises. Tarija, to the south, is also rich in resources.

Q: Is the great problem capital flight or just plain corruption? Were there a set of root causes that caused this terrible economic crisis?

ROE: Corruption and despotism were the sour legacy of the colonial period. The 1952 revolution gave the vote to women and indigenous people. The MNR - the Revolutionary Nationalist Movement party of Paz Estenssoro - forged a social consensus, drawing together members of the middle class with the trade unions and campesinos to make major reforms. They broke down a feudal system, but their land reforms didn't open a way for poor farmers to advance. Peasants got small parcels with little to no access to credit or technical support, and they remained deeply indebted. The pre-revolutionary inequities were reinforced because the government was resource-poor and unable to support changes in agricultural production. Today, according to the UN, 100 families own 62 million acres while 2 million small farmers work 12 million acres.

The nationalization of the mines soaked up scarce resources as global tin markets were shrinking. With a government bureaucracy mired in patronage and cronyism, there was no room for competitiveness. In the 1960's the IMF and other IFIs (international financial institutions) promoted austerity measures to transform the economy without addressing these deeper problems. The main onus was placed on public workers and the miners, whose hard-won benefits began evaporating. Runaway inflation fell hard on the urban middle class, driving many into the opposition. The MNR coalition fractured under these pressures. Adding to the political conflict, the U.S. was working with the Bolivian armed forces to develop a pilot project to eradicate coca production, a major source of livelihood for impoverished farmers. As a last-ditch survival strategy, displaced miners from the altiplano were becoming coca farmers.

Q: Did you get involved with the campesinos and the collision of various forces?

ROE: I had contacts with the campesino unions. I engaged with organizations that were proposing alternative strategies. I reported on developments in the labor and human rights communities, and followed the MIR party and a cluster of radical groups. I participated in the USAID's Small Projects Development Fund, which sadly no longer exists. The Fund channeled resources to the Altiplano and other indigenous communities. Each project was capped at \$10,000, and the community had to match that in funds or sweat equity. They helped build schools, start microenterprises and health clinics. In cooperation with the campesino federation I identified several pilot projects that were approved, and joined AID officers in inaugurating them.

One time I traveled with AID to Huancarama, a remote altiplano community, to commemorate one of their literacy programs. When we arrived at the site of the celebration, I was surprised to find myself introduced as one of the featured speakers. So I had to think fast. At an altitude of around 14,500 feet, this wasn't a snap. After the main event, the local leaders invited us to visit other villages that had handicraft exhibits. We explained that we had to get back down the mountainside before dark. The campesino blockaded us and refused to let us leave. So we stopped at other villages until eventually we talked our way out.

The tin mines were failing and the economy was in free fall. The only alternatives the government could offer were for miners to scratch out a living in agriculture or in the tiny, doomed cooperative mines. Those miners are still scavenging inside the largely abandoned silver and tin mines, living in desperate circumstances. Most die before the age of 45 from black lung, mining accidents or hunger. Meanwhile, the political scene was rocked by conspiracies which only a writer of magical realism could imagine. President Zuazo was briefly kidnapped in 1984. A group of leftist paramilitaries rumored to have Interior Ministry passes were arrested for apparent possession of army weapons.

Q: From what I gather particularly on the labor side we were concentrating on the altiplano as opposed to the agricultural places down Santa Cruz and elsewhere.

ROE: Yes, in the sense that the most potent unrest emerged from the altiplano. USAID's efforts were countrywide, with a focus on the poorer regions. Santa Cruz and the Beni have been the center of the "other" Bolivia's prosperity. They are practically separate economies. La Paz and the highlands were struggling with severe economic and social crises.

Q: Was there any spillover from Chile under Pinochet and from Argentina, which was trying to bring itself back into the world economic order?

ROE: Chile wasn't considered a model by most Bolivians, although some elements no doubt liked Pinochet's iron fist or "mano duro." Argentina was no beacon either. I worked closely with the Catholic Church and with NGOs that were helping to grow civil society and advocate respect for human rights. Although Bolivia had a free press, the country still had a repressive police system and rampant inequalities. I learned the power of the telephone: sometimes calling a jail to inquire about a prisoner's fate would convince his or her tormentors that people on the outside were watching and prepared to act. I also cooperated with the Federation of Private Sector Employers, CEPD. They organized their own general strikes to protest violent union takeovers and the breakdown of law and order. Few were fans of Pinochet, but they liked the economic reforms his government initiated.

Q: The Chicago boys.

ROE: The monetarists didn't find a lot of fertile ground in La Paz. Bolivian entrepreneurs were a pragmatic lot. They tended to be skeptical of big ideas from big countries. Most CEPD leaders wanted market forces to be free to work their wonders, but they realized the need for social safety nets to create a more educated work force. Politically, they were closer to the Spanish conservatives and some of the German Christian Democrats.

Q: You mentioned at one point the mine owners saying the "Yankees are sitting on the hill. They're going to do something if you don't watch out." I would think there would be a very strong anti-American theme there.

ROE: Oh, there was a very strong anti-American current. Still the intelligentsia and some on the left remembered that the U.S. under President Eisenhower supported the social revolution in the 1950s. Bolivians across the board identified with President Kennedy and the Alliance for Progress.

Q: That was a program-

ROE: To spur economic development and spreading democracy in the region. It was a helping hand extended to our neighbors. President Kennedy said our destinies are linked to those of the poorest regions of the world. He acted on those words. The Alliance was flawed in its reliance on government-to-government aid. But it kindled a spark of hope that lasted long after Bolivia's reform movement peaked. In 1984, during a visit to Siglo XX, the largest tin mine and a hotbed of social rebellion, I learned that the local high school was named after Franklin Delano Roosevelt. We set up a project through USIS (United States Information Service) to bring a group of miners' children from Siglo XX and Catavi to the U.S. They were selected through a competitive essay. The students stayed with U.S. mining families for three months in Colorado, Utah and West Virginia. After the tour, one student commented that "Americans have a lot, but they work really hard for the things they have."

Bolivians appreciated U.S. efforts to keep their fledgling democratic government from toppling. Ambassador Corr actively discouraged several incipient military coups against President Siles Zuazo. During the general strike of 1984, the COB staged a seventeen-day blockade of La Paz. No one could get in or out of the city. I was taking the pulse on the streets, talking with the operations center and sending daily situation reports. Corr and Walker helped to cool tempers on both sides.

Of course, the dogmatic left loved to hate the U.S. What brought out the strongest nationalism and paranoia were the coca wars. One of my more awkward assignments was to survey attitudes in the Chapare towards U.S. assistance efforts on the eve of a major campaign to try and halt drug-related coca production. I interviewed a local radio announcer, priests, campesinos. None were sanguine about the prospects for the anti-drug intervention, but they seemed glad to have someone hear them out. The high point of my trip was riding a water buffalo at a local farm. But the subject of my interviews terrified the USAID rep who escorted me around the region. He said, "I don't know you. I don't know what you're doing. Let's just say I'm your driver."

Q: The Chapare being-

ROE: Chapare is a semitropical province north of Cochabamba that was a prime target for coca eradication. It has around 35,000 inhabitants, nearly all farmers.

Q: Miners and people in the altiplano chewed coca to be able to work, didn't they?

ROE: Yes; coca is a traditional crop. Miners and other highlanders have used it for centuries for religious purposes and health reasons. The plant helps them withstand harsh, cold conditions and to resist hunger. It's a natural stimulus that also alleviates stomach problems. It's an excellent tea. When I went down into the Siglo XX mine, it was one of the first times a woman had been allowed to enter the mine shafts. I saw effigies to the gods of the underworld. People leave offerings of coca to ask for the deities' protection against cave-ins.

Q: One thinks of Colombia where the drug lords don't take prisoners. Had that happened in Bolivia?

ROE: It's a danger wherever big drug money accumulates. But Bolivia was a raw materials venue, not a cocaine supplier like Colombia or Mexico. There were no factories to convert coca into cocaine. The eastern part of Bolivia in the Beni and other flatlands is studded with runways for the illicit export of coca.

Q: What was social life like? I mean this is a new experience for you. La Paz is an older, Hispanic society. Here you are a single woman. How did you find that?

ROE: My close friends included Canadians and Australians, and we'd team up in putting on larger parties for our Bolivian contacts. I had a modestly sized apartment with a small patio in Calacoto, where foreigners and many professional Bolivians lived. The embassy functions were lively, not the boring Fourth of July type functions. When Ambassador Corr had people over to talk about politics, he often included me because so much impinged on what the labor movement was doing, the political parties I followed or human rights concerns. Bill Lofstrom, the political counselor, and his wife Ana Maria lived just a few houses down from me. Intellectuals and journalists and other public figures frequented their salon and enjoyed their gracious hospitality.

During my first year I started dating a race car driver, Oscar Crespo, a Bolivian version of Paul Newman. He was born in Sucre, grew up in abject poverty and made himself wealthy running a car sales and rental business in La Paz. We traveled to the countryside when I had time off.

You asked about this being a new life for me. I recall a Cuban-American professor in one of my FSI classes warning, "Beware of the altitude and the loneliness. Bolivia is remote, like the wrong side of the moon." Others called it the Tibet of the Americas. Yet my first arrival there struck me like a home-coming.

I flew to La Paz from Panama City in a small jetliner, arriving at dawn. The plane approached over a huge plateau with humongous peaks on either side. This was the altiplano, opening into a long valley where La Paz seemed sunken in a long curving bowl. We curled around, flying back to the edge. I prayed the pilot was alert. The plane landed lightly as a feather on a narrow runway, 14,000 feet above sea level. The airport looked like a small country store. A few embassy souls met me, some grouching about the desolate social life, the health problems. I was oblivious. My whole being absorbed the vivid colors, the Indian faces, their graceful movements and stoical expressions, the indigenous artwork filling the front of the airport. The view was stunning.

I felt exhilarated to be there. The best advice I received was to take aspirin every four hours, even if you feel great. With that remedy, I never had altitude sickness. Within two days, Ambassador Corr said, "Hey, we're going to Guaqui, come along." Guaqui is the port town on Lake Titicaca, 13,000 feet high in the mountains. It's the narrow part of the lake across from Peru. The town houses a steam car workshop. We were invited by the railroad workers' federation and the national railroad company, ENFE. We traveled by rail in the eight-person coach called a ferrobús. I didn't realize that I was coming down with gastroenteritis. The night before I had savored the Bolivian beer which is delicious, dark, like German beer and had eaten spicy foods: both not advised in the first week. As we rode switchback up the mountain in the little eight-person coach called a ferrobús, my stomach felt like a deep sea diver's getting decompression cramps.

Q: Yes, the bends.

ROE: It felt like two saws were working inside of me. Our hosts offered more typical, spiced-up Bolivian food. I ate some out of courtesy. I kept feeling worse and worse. But the voyage was unforgettable. Two snowcapped Andean mountain ranges encircled us. We traversed a corral of clay, rust-colored foothills. Adobe villages arose like garrisons in a wild West movie. Farmers tended flocks of sheep, llamas, burros, tilling fields with ancient wooden plows, the men with brightly woven wool helmets, the women garbed with bustling layers of skirts, brilliant mantas and bowler hats. Lines of schoolchildren, railroad and dock workers greeted us. We visited Isla Saint Rosa on two customs patrol launches, passing fishermen in tiny sailboats. Returning to Guaqui, we entered the massive red-stoned colonial Iglesia del Apostol Santiago. Inside the church, shimmering gold panels, saints sculpted in the mestizo Baroque style. Outside, bleak poverty. Two worlds, one town.

When I returned to the Embassy I visited Kuni, the nurse. She gave me a pill to calm my stomach and took a blood sample. At 8:00 that evening, someone knocked on my door. Kuni was alarmed about my white blood cell count and sent a Bolivian doctor to treat my gastroenteritis. It was a welcome surprise.

Q: Who was the political counselor in La Paz?

ROE: Dan Strasser in the first year and William Lofstrom beginning in 1984.

Q: Do you know where Lofstrom is now?

ROE: Bill retired and is now living in Sucre, Bolivia with his wife Ana Maria Zamora. He headed the Latin American area studies program at FSI and wrote a number of books on Bolivian and South American history. A brilliant officer and a real gentleman. The FSN (foreign service national) staff of the economic section were close collaborators. Fernando Urquidi, a geological engineer who knew the mining sector inside out, shared many insights in our efforts to interpret the socio-economic upheavals.

Earlier, you had asked me about corruptioit was endemic in Bolivia, but more on the order of officials who lined their pockets when they got in power. Bolivia is a traditional society. Your reputation is gold there. The good business people were well known and those who cut corners or were ruthless or corrupt were also known. The same is true of the political elite.

Q: You didn't find that you were having to pay the policeman a bribe not to get a ticket-

ROE: Actually I did once. I was driving my jeep and a policeman stopped me. I was worried, it was late at night. So I asked if he could pay my fine because I was going to have a hard time getting to the court. That was my one fall from grace.

Q: But it wasn't a corporate, I mean a large scale bribe as happens in so many places now.

ROE: Not in that league. During the previous century, one of Bolivia's presidents sold away large land tracts to make a fortune on guano production. There was huge demand for guano in Europe. Bolivia's colonial era rulers used the government as their private piggy bank.

Q: How did you find the church when you were there?

ROE: The Catholic Church was a mixed bag. In the provinces, the religious hierarchy was often tied to the same local establishment that had kept the campesinos in their place for centuries. In La Paz, the archbishop's social policy and human rights council leaders were highly committed Jesuits. The director, Father Jose Gramunt, a Spanish Catalan, wrote a newsletter on human rights and social developments in Bolivia. It was one of the most objective chronicles of the times you could find. Father Gramunt was also a regular contributor to the La Paz Catholic daily Presencia. Gramunt and his Jesuit colleagues were looking dispassionately at these catastrophic conditions. They weren't judgmental. They were advocating a more humane, pragmatic approach to problems. I remember the feeling of tranquility that came from talking with them, visiting their office. They were looking at the whole pattern.

Q: Did your friend open up fields of contact?

ROE: I kept my private life separate from my professional life. We traveled to the Yungas and to other remote parts of Bolivia. Oscar's daughter, Roxanna Crespo, was just beginning her career as an artist while raising two young children. On the eve of my departure for Chile, she planned her first exposition. Oscar asked if I could help. I had no experience in doing that, but he mainly wanted moral support. I invited friends from different embassies, my riding group and other Bolivian contacts. It was standing room only. Roxanna sold every painting, and became one of the country's more successful artists. Oscar and I kept dating when I began my assignment in Chile. He had been wary of making a commitment, and I had no interest in getting married again. When I moved to Chile, he became Othello-like. That ended our relationship. But the family remained. I'm still friends with Roxanna and very close to her mother, Nora Van Bories, who lives in Santiago to look after Gogo, their handicapped son, a charmer. Nora was an attorney who had advised the ILO (International Labor Organization) experts who came to help revise Bolivia's labor laws in the 50's and '60's. Through Nora I met the former President, Lidia Geuiler, and recently reconnected with Tony Sanchez de Lozada and his family in Santiago.

Q: It's basically a small society.

ROE: Rich with intrigue and history. I also took in a German exchange student, Doethe Pardo, when the home stay she had arranged through the Partners of the Americas had fallen through. She stayed with me for most of my tour. When she returned to Germany, Doethe became an environmental attorney, married a young Chilean and had two children. That was a window into the young expatriate backpacking community.

Q: When you left La Paz, it was 1985. And you're off to-

ROE: In July 1985, I took an assignment as political officer in Chile. When my human rights contacts heard I was considering Santiago, they said, "Oh you don't want to do that. It's very dark there." I said, "There must be some rays of light or else people couldn't cope." Ambassador Corr asked me to go to El Salvador with him. I couldn't see myself in a place where I'd be restricted in my movements and where the U.S. presence was so disproportionate. Fortunately Corr understood. He helped me land the political officer position in Santiago. As I got ready to depart post, the USAID director asked me to adopt a beautiful blue and gold macaw bird that he had raised with his hunting dog. He had been assigned to Indonesia and found that he couldn't bring the macaw with him. So I acquired a large parrot, whom I called Rosita the Loqui. Getting her a passport to enter Chile was a complicated transaction.

Q: Who was the Ambassador in Santiago?

ROE: The Ambassador, James Theberge, was finishing up his term. Harry Barnes arrived two or three months into my tour.

Q: What was the situation in Chile when you got there in '85?

ROE: It was gloomy, conflicted. Though Bolivia was also in turmoil, by comparison this felt like stepping into a cauldron. Augusto Pinochet had been in power since the coup he led as army commander on September 11, 1973. President Salvador Allende committed suicide that day in La Moneda palace. Pinochet ruled with an iron fist. He outlawed the political parties. Tens of thousands were tortured, disappeared, killed or exiled during his campaign against the pro-Allende communists and socialists. The military government planned to implement a provision of the 1976 constitution to recognize certain political parties in a formal process, but few Chileans believed this would take place or lead to positive change. The 1980 constitution imposed by Pinochet further concentrated his powers. It promised an eventual return to electoral "democracy," beginning with a plebiscite in 1988 in which voters could say "yes" or "no" to the junta's sole candidate.

The opposition to Pinochet made itself felt through massive street demonstrations. Some mainstream political parties joined in, but those in charge were mostly the trade union vanguard, students and the radical left. The police would douse the protesters with water canons, spray tear gas, and start shooting with little provocation. The middle class was unhappy about the repression but also weary of these futile confrontations. Chileans felt frustrated and depressed. Beggars held out their hands at every street corner. The crisis over foreign exchange triggered a sharp recession.

Q: Well, we were deep into the Reagan period. Jean Kirkpatrick as our Ambassador to the UN also sat in on the cabinet and was stating that we should work closely with the military leaders in Latin America, because they were closer to our ideals and all. How stood our policy towards Chile when you went there?

ROE: Kirkpatrick's 1979 article in Commentary magazine argued that the U.S. should work with authoritarian governments like those of Chile, Argentina and South Africa because they were more likely to lead to democracy than were revolutionary regimes of the left. This was debatable, but it tagged her as pro-dictator. She also fervently criticized President Carter's human rights policies. Outgoing Ambassador James Theberge was in the Kirkpatrick mode. He maintained a pretty friendly relationship with the military government. Theberge kept his distance from the leading opposition figure, Gabriel Valdez, the President of the Christian Democratic Party (PDC). In the early 1980s the U.S. frequently bashed the PDC and other center left opposition parties for not banning the communists from taking part in the protest demonstrations. But the U.S. Congress kept a close eye on human rights violations, and the Embassy raised its voice on those issues. The human rights officer...

Q: Who was that?

ROE: Don Knight, who also arrived in the summer of '85, was the labor and human rights officer. He covered all the demonstrations, worked closely with Solidaridad, the Catholic human rights agency, and visited imprisoned trade union leaders. When I arrived, John Keane was political counselor. George Jones soon became the Deputy Chief of Mission (DCM). Connie Poli was office manager, a quiet, steadfast spirit in the political section. The political officer whom I replaced had formed relationships with most democratic political parties except the socialists. This changed after Ambassador Harry Barnes's arrival.

The front office tapped me to draft Barnes' credentials speech. I was stumped at first - how do you say to Pinochet that we're here to undermine you and assist the rebirth of democracy? So I brainstormed with Jorge Castillo, the senior FSN and a stalwart in the political section. The message we crafted was: "We have deep, long-standing ties and common interests with Chile and its people. We support the goal of a transition to democracy. We'll be watching closely to see how this process evolves..."

During Ambassador Barnes' first few weeks, he went to visit Gabriel Valdez in his office. His gesture sent shockwaves throughout the Pinochet government. The pro-Pinochet hawks disseminated a rumor that when Barnes left Chile, it would be in a six-foot box. (Actually they would have needed a six-foot-five box because the Ambassador is a tall man.) The new U.S. approach emboldened the opposition. Even the pro-democracy conservatives began finding their voices. The Europeans had been supporting the opposition financially, in a patchwork approach. Barnes met daily with key civic, political and intellectual leaders one on one at his residence. I often sat in on these. Barnes had a photographic memory. When he went to meet with Pinochet or the members of his junta, he would report every word that was said. A huge audience in Washington followed these conversations.

Q: Well, when Barnes came, did he come out and say we are going to be more supportive of the opposition?

ROE: His actions spoke that message. The Embassy no longer echoed the right's criticism of the opposition. That's why the first Barnes-Valdez meeting was such a profound shift. We opened up close channels with the democratic socialist wing of the opposition, which the U.S. had previously tended to equate with the Allende left.

The outgoing cultural attaché, Peter DeShazo, opened his house to democratic socialists as well as to Christian Democrats and other opposition leaders, but Ambassador Theberge strongly discouraged these ties. I made contact with a myriad of political groups. These included socialists, the Radical party, and the Humanists, a left-of-center international organization founded in Argentina that advocates non-violence and the development of human potential; the National party, an older conservative grouping; and Renovación Nacional, a new moderate conservative party with an engaging leader, Andres Allemand, a former national soccer hero of Chile.

Q: During this time did the French, the British and the Germans, maybe the Scandinavians all have strong groups like the Friedrich Ebert foundation that supported socialist parties around the world?

ROE: All were engaged to some degree. Chilean exiles had fostered these ties. The Europeans sponsored many Chilean socialist, Christian democratic and democratic left leaders. They supported their think tanks, some of which like FLACSO (the Latin American Faculty of Social Sciences) were mini- governments in exile. In the mid-80s Ricardo Lagos formed a democratic socialist party called the PPD, Partido por la Promoción de la Democracia. The PPD was a friendly competitor with the Socialist Party, which had both an Allende wing and a larger democratic socialist wing.

Together with the new PAO (USIS director) Marilyn McAfee, I sought out and sponsored many emerging Chilean leaders to go to the U.S. so they could better understand the U.S. policy environment. We wanted to balance the strong European orientation among the opposition. The intellectual climate shifted as they saw how serious we were about supporting the democracy movement, without trying to impose any terms of our own.

Q: What was your piece of the action as a political officer?

ROE: I was liaison with the political parties. I reported on political developments from the provinces. I worked with the National Electoral Commission (CNE). The Commission was directed by Juan Ignacio Garcia, whose brother was Interior Minister. Juan Ignacio, an experienced civil servant, had been in the government from the time of Frei and Allende.

As we approached the plebiscite, the U.S. provided 1.5 million dollars in assistance to ensure that the plebiscite would have a level playing field. Cívitas, one of the main civil society organizations, ran a nationwide campaign to re-register all the Chileans who wanted to vote. Pinochet had destroyed all the registration rolls and established a national identification system. To register, people had to pay the equivalent of nearly 5 dollars to get an ID card and then get on the electoral rolls. It was an onerous process. Under the leadership of Monica Jimenez, the head of Catholic University's School of Social Work, Cívitas mounted a non-partisan voter education campaign to convince people their vote would be counted and to assist them in registering. The Pinochet regime undercut their efforts to get public service announcements and paid television advertising. I helped convince Juan Ignacio Garcia that Cívitas and Monica Jimenez did not have a political agenda and were legitimate actors.

As the 1988 plebiscite loomed, Washington was hungry to find out if there really was any chance for a fraud-free election. I briefed the news reporters on that issue. I analyzed the implementation of political laws under the 1976 constitution, the emerging civil society organizations and political party dynamics. I helped promote emerging women leaders through IVs and lunch sessions hosted by PAO Marilyn McAfee.

Q: It sounds like we were meddling like hell in Pinochet's country.

ROE: We were engaged, but more subtly than during the Allende period. And that experience left a big debt to pay. U.S. assistance to the opposition was non-partisan, because there were no candidates in the plebiscite, just a vote to say "si" or "no" to the regime. As for Cile 1/2vitas, somebody had to go out and help register people. Ambassador Barnes kept the lines of communication open to both sides, playing such a deft game that Pinochet had to think twice before openly attacking the U.S. Pinochet's military junta was a quasi-cabinet that also doubled as his legislative counsel. Two of the four junta members were asserting their independence from Pinochet: Air Force Commander Matthei and Carabineros Commander Stange. They resisted Pinochet's moves to undermine his own constitution. That was a key opening.

Meanwhile Pinochet's government was making political parties into legitimate actors, while demonizing them in its propaganda. The PDC, PPD, the radicals, conservatives and eventually the Partido Socialista won recognition. Within a year of the plebiscite, key opposition forces moved from raw confrontation politics to a willingness to work through the political process. Pinochet hated and mistrusted us, but some elements in his government were moderating their stance, either to make a more presentable case to the world, or because they understood the imperative for change.

Q: What about the Letelier case while you were there?

ROE: It was a constant concern. The '76 car bombing in Washington that killed foreign minister Orlando Letelier and his U.S. aide Ronni Moffitt transformed U.S. relations with Pinochet. It triggered a cutoff of military aid and a decades-long investigation of the role of top officials including Pinochet himself in the assassination. At one point Juan Gabriel Valdez, who later became Chilean ambassador to the UN, offered to provide sensitive information on the case and I connected him with Ambassador Barnes. The Congress and the NGO community kept up pressure in the effort to develop credible information for the Justice Department. The case stayed red hot. In the end it was a major element in Pinochet's downfall. And speaking of interference in another country: sending hit men to assassinate a foreign minister in the U.S. capitol was about the limit

Q: That had quite an aftershock. Turning to another subject there are many who maintain that Allende was not a pristine figure. Meaning, they were getting ready for their own sort of People's Republic. This was not an overthrowing of the savior or something. Did you get a feel for the Allende types and where they were coming from?

ROE: Allende inspired great passions pro and con. I didn't have direct contact with the communists, but I knew some Allende supporters. Many were romantic socialists, some neophytes, others real Marxist zealots. In the early 1970s, the collapsing social and economic system and the political fanaticism of Allende's supporters drove many progressives, including Christian Democrats, to feel that Pinochet would be a lesser evil. The CIA's machinations were idiotic and damaging, but they didn't create the wave of revulsion toward the regime. Allende didn't understand the nature of the Soviet system or the way the economy worked. He set in motion some dangerous forces that caused real hardship and desperation among the population. The radical takeovers of factories and farms and the government's nationalization policies led to a precipitous loss of agricultural and industrial production. There were long food lines and acute shortages. The majority of Chileans were fed up.

Q: Sort of what is happening today in Zimbabwe.

ROE: The climate was more circus-like and less violent in Chile, but still it was over the top. The chaos helped precipitate an army coup. Unfortunately, nobody expected that Pinochet would then seize dictatorial powers.

Speaking about my contact with the Allende people - something happened early in my tour that gave me a curious perspective. In December '85 we learned through back channels that one of the Embassy officers had been targeted for kidnapping by local terrorists. Immediately they thought it must be a male officer. Well, who would be important enough to kidnap? Must be a man.

Q: But of course.

ROE: First the station chief, the political counselor and then the labor officer were put under heavy guard. The profile was someone who had a lot of political contacts throughout Chile. By that time I took my postponed annual leave, we learned that it was a female officer. So they put extra security on an intel officer in Santiago - I was in the U.S. and had just left upstate New York for a week in Puerto Rico. Then headquarters called me while I was vacationing in San Juan saying I'd been curtailed because I was the terrorist target! A two-month tug of war ensued.

Ambassador Barnes opposed the curtailment decision. We knew that the terrorists had dropped their plan, as they didn't have safe houses or other infrastructure to make it work. But I was unable to return until ARA (Inter-American Affairs) and DS (the Diplomatic Security bureau) fought it out. Finally DS asked me what I thought. I said heck, yes, I want to go back. I had a dog, a parrot, a house in Chile. I had no winter clothes, since I had sent them back to Chile after my home visit. Washington in winter was cold, unyielding. I had no checkbook and this was before the age of bank cards. DS said, "Well, you haven't read the information carefully though. They knew all about you." I said, "This says that Joe Fozo followed me a few days and they decided they couldn't hold me safely." The security people were trying without success to put the fear in me. The Department eventually had a shoot-out. Michael Armacost, Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs, made the final call that I return.

In the meantime I volunteered on the Haiti taskforce that was set up as Duvalier's government collapsed. I took the language exam and got a 4/4 in Spanish. I asked for training in counterterrorism techniques. The course was in Florida. After it ended, I was about to board my flight and return to Chile when I got a call from Assistant Secretary Bob Gelbard. He said "You can't go yet." I replied, "What do you mean? The desk told me it was a done decision." He said, "Well, don't go, we're still in negotiations." I had heard that Bolivia urgently needed help because the labor attaché<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub> was on extended sick leave. I said, "You need to get me to La Paz or somewhere where I can work, or I'm going to go to Chile and get my checkbook and look after my dog on my own ticket." He was not used to being talked to that way, but the next day I got my orders to go to Bolivia. After two more months the Department allowed me to return to Santiago, but I had to remain under constant guard for five months.

During that time, on two separate occasions distant Socialist Party contacts approached me. With a great air of secrecy and concern, each said, "Charlotte, we have very troubling information. Did you know you've been targeted?" I said, "Possibly, but that was then."

Q: Well, who was targeting you?

ROE: It was a small underground group called the MIR, the Movimiento de Izquierda Revolucionario. They had hatched the idea when El Salvador President Duarte's daughter was kidnapped in September '85 to force the release of political prisoners there. The MIR hoped to use me to get their political prisoners sprung in Chile. You can imagine what Pinochet would have said: good riddance!

Q: Kind of like The Ransom of Red Chief.

ROE: That was the O. Henry story where two fugitives kidnapped a boy and held him for ransom, but the bad guys couldn't get anyone to take the little troublemaker. In my case, the would-be kidnappers realized it was a no-go because they lacked resources for stage two. One of the Chileans who got wind of this was an attorney for several jailed MIR dissidents. I told him "don't worry" but sometimes I wasn't so sure, because I couldn't travel anywhere without two armed escorts. To go to the theatre, I needed a limousine and a follow car. I thought, what a brilliant way to make me a bigger target! Because of the threat, the Embassy moved me from my house to a garden apartment. To be able to cover both sides of the flat, the guards had to camp out in the middle. I literally had no privacy. That summer, I finally convinced George Jones, the DCM, to call off the guards. The whole episode was pretty stressful. But it showed me that Chileans will look out for you if they sense you're fair and open.

Q: During this time how much contact did the Embassy, mainly Harry Barnes but maybe others have with Pinochet and his immediate aides?

ROE: Ambassador Barnes occasionally met with Pinochet. The readouts were fairly cryptic. Pinochet was not a big talker. Pinochet reportedly had a close relationship with Senator Jesse Helms, but that's another story. The more useful contacts were with members of the junta. Barnes met regularly with Generals Stange and Matthei, much less so with the Army Commander or with Navy Commander Merino, who was the most pro-Pinochet in the junta and famous for his ludicrous pronouncements. One of my contacts, Jose Antonio Cousino, worked in the Interior Ministry and taught political science at the University of Chile. He provided some valuable insights on the Letelier case and on changing attitudes within the administration, and would later become Director of Planning for the Foreign Ministry under President Lagos.

Q: Within Chilean society did you find it rather sharply divided between supporters of Pinochet and non-supporters or how were you received by these various groups?

ROE: Chilean society was fractured under Allende and even more so under most of Pinochet's reign. The political paranoia fostered by his regime was meant to keep people divided. Embassy functions, both ours and the Europeans, were among the only places the government moderates, the conservative nationals and the democratic left could meet and converse freely.

Q: I would think in a society such as that you would have those people who represent the old society that don't look kindly on a junked up army officer. Same way Napoleon was never fully accepted by many of the Parisians.

ROE: That came into play. Mostly, they felt betrayed. Chileans see their country as a place of "convivencia" which roughly translates as "living together harmoniously." The Chilean sense of order and social justice is a legend that began with Pedro de Valdivia. Chileans are proud of their country as a middle class haven, a country that escaped the worst colonial oppression of the lands that supplied Spain's gold and silver. They're also acutely aware of their economic interdependence. Both the opposition and the shadow reform elements in the government wanted to build bridges not only with Europe but also with Southeast Asia. They knew that Pinochet's repression damaged Chile's image, and that the boycotts hurt economically.

The old elite were stuffy and overbearing. I remember attending a dinner party that was top heavy with this group. One patrician learned that I'd served previously in La Paz and asked me, "Well, how was Bolivia?" expecting that I was going to say, they live in caves, they eat off of the street. Instead I said, "It was a fascinating place. They've been through some real turmoil, but they have a lively free press. The national debates in the Congress are completely free, open - they're nationally televised and attract a huge audience." When I mentioned the vibrant civic life, a few guests looked about ready to have heart attacks on the spot. The last thing they expected was to hear the view that Bolivia was more advanced in civic discourse.

Q: What was the reputation of the so-called Chicago Boys and had they started to take root among those making economic policy?

ROE: Oh yes, they had influence. Milton Friedman, the guru of the monetarist school of economists based at the University of Chicago, taught and groomed quite a few of Pinochet's top advisors. Generally, the Chicago Boys (CB) recipe for privatizing and removing trade barriers and balancing the macroeconomic variables was judged to be a success. Of course the pundits admitted that you can only implement severe fiscal austerity if you have an iron fist. You can impose them without worrying about the democratic political process. But there are big costs. Not having rule of law means you won't have transparent governance or marketplace; you won't build investor confidence or have economic sustainability. The CB economists erred, for example, in pegging the peso to the dollar. Most observers faulted the government for making the two recessions much deeper than necessary and this may have cost Pinochet a lot of political support.

You had asked about public reactions to those trying to push U.S. ideas on another country. Well, Chileans didn't want the CB model imposed by an academic institution in the U.S. or anyone else. They adopted those reforms on their terms. When Chileans elected Patricio Aylwin president in 1989, his government and successive administrations kept in place the bulk of the economic reforms. They married the Chicago monetarists to a Chilean version of the New Deal. During the fourteen years of democratic government following Pinochet, Chile's economy maintained fiscal stability while strengthening its social net. They've been the tiger of Latin America. They still have a long ways to go to cut bureaucracy, but post-Pinochet Chile reduced poverty by thirty percent in a decade, which few countries can boast.

Q: What about those who've been expelled. I think it was it Neruda and

ROE: Pablo Neruda came back from exile. He died of cancer, shortly after the 1993 takeover by Pinochet. Neruda passed away just as Pinochet sent his henchmen to take over his residence in Isla Negra.

Q: During your time?

ROE: Both before and during. Lagos was exiled after the '73 coup and returned to Chile in '78. Ricardo Lagos, the head of the Partido Socialista, was exiled and also returned. Many literary figures came back. Manuel Bustos, the fiery head of the Chilean labor federation, returned from exile in Australia.

Q: Well, was this a policy on the part of the Pinochet government to bring them back and watch them?

ROE: I'm not sure about all the motivations, but it most likely aimed to get some international credibility by showing the government was following the constitutional path and that Chile was no longer an outlaw country.

Q: What about Chile's border relations at that time? What were we picking up from your contacts and all about Argentina and Peru?

ROE: Chileans are always concerned about Peru. They never lost a transnational war, but they are constantly vigilant about their frontiers. In the late '70s Chile almost came to blows with Argentina. The Pope John Paul intervened in a dramatic moment in 1978.

Q: The Beagle Straits?

ROE: That was the issue. Chile and Argentina finally accepted the Vatican's mediation, and in '84 they signed a peace treaty resolving the Beagle dispute. During the Falklands war, Argentina suspected that Chile favored the Brits, and apparently they had quietly supported the British task force in the Southern Atlantic.

Our main focus was to ensure that Chileans had a chance to have their votes count in the plebiscite and the capacity to make the transition to democracy. Pinochet had committed to an open plebiscite, but few believed his words. We thought the procedural instruments the government had put in place could create the framework for a free and fair election, if the military regime didn't abort the process. Chile is a legalistic, constitutional country that prides itself on respecting the law. The opposition gained strength when it abandoned the strategy of social mobilization in favor of an electoral strategy. Another turning point came when Ricardo Lagos challenged Pinochet directly. In 1984, a year before the plebiscite, he gave a speech in Antofagasta, a bleak, troubled industrial port about halfway between Iquique and Valparaíso that used to be a mining center.

This was one of Lagos' first rallies as president of PPD, the center-left party he founded in 1987. He was faced with a disruptive group of Communists. The Communist party believed that only armed conflict could end the dictatorship. Few in the opposition knew how to best them. Lagos talked back without hesitation and subdued the hecklers. He also held up his finger to Pinochet and said basically, "J'acuse, I accuse you, Pinochet, of years of torture, murder and violence; I accuse you of not telling the truth." Nobody had dared to stand up to Pinochet as an equal. The effect was electrifying.

After that encounter, the parties supporting participation in the plebiscite began recruiting en masse. The *Cívitas* campaign gained ground. The plebiscite was in October of '88. Three months before the vote, Pinochet's own Supreme Court overturned the junta-approved election regulations saying, "This doesn't meet the fairness test. Your own constitution mandates better rules." Pinochet would allow opposition voices to have television time, but only for a few minutes at midnight. The courts mandated fair, equal time and changed the rules of the game. That decision built confidence. The opposition had coalesced into what was called the Coordinadora, eighteen political parties under one tent running a single "no" campaign for the plebiscite. The conservative parties remained apart, but some also supported the no vote. The Coordinadora's TV ads were brilliant. They were like political cabaret, with great music and light-hearted lyrics. They rocked people with an upbeat message.

Lagos, who was elected President of Chile in 2000, visited the U.S in the pre-plebiscite period. He asked me to arrange a key part of the trip. We set up a voluntary visitor program through USIS to facilitate his goal of meeting with Wall Street people. Lagos wanted to let them know that when the "no" vote prevailed, it wasn't going to hurt the economy, that the opposition leadership was committed to keep the basic economic framework in place and work to humanize it. That was a very effective message. A transformation was underway. Our policies and actions had deep resonance, but they were not the main story. The evolving national consensus and the eventual plebiscite victory grew out of tremendous suffering that Chileans had experienced. They found a way to come together and recover their democratic ethos.

Q: I think that earlier, the Army had essentially come out of the barracks. But of course Allende was upsetting the cart from the left, whereas Pinochet came from the right.

ROE: Pinochet brought a different kind of technocrat into government from the middle class. He curried a reputation of being an uncorrupted dictator. That image was greatly padded, and now we've seen the revelations about the millions he funneled abroad.

Q: You left there when?

ROE: I was paneled to be labor attaché½ in Israel and left Chile in 1989.

Q: So you were there for an historic time.

ROE: Yes, four years of struggle and exhilarating change.

Q: Now what information was the Embassy getting as we approached the plebiscite? I imagine that Pinochet with his police and all figured he had it made.

ROE: Oh, Pinochet was very confident. Losing the plebiscite completely stunned him. The polls were pretty imprecise. People would tell different things to the pollsters based on whether or not they trusted them or thought the balloting would be fair. So it was a confidence game. But we saw hopeful signs with the banding together of the democratic opposition, the soul searching that led to them presenting a more credible alternative, a team that could Chile to the rule of law and manage the economic transition. Pinochet was trying to say, "after me chaos" in the style of Louis XIV, "Après moi, le deluge." That was his constant theme, but it was falling flat because the country was deeply divided under him. It was becoming ungovernable.

As hope rekindled, the opposition lightened up, making fun of Pinochet as a doddering old man. Talking with people in the provinces, I saw a tremendous groundswell of support for the "no" side. We thought the opposition could win as long as elections proceeded as planned. But I got wind of something that would have completely thrown the election. One of my close contacts was Jorge Jimenez, the brother of Monica Jimenez, who ran Círculo. Jorge, a medical doctor, was the opposition liaison with the military. Five days before the plebiscite, Monica called me in Valparaiso where I was doing a pre-election assessment. She said Jorge had solid information that Pinochet intended to stage a mini-coup the night of the election. The plan was to provoke violence and claim it came from the left. They would bring out the soldiers and there would be massive confrontations and bloodshed. The election count would be called off. It would be the last opportunity to fix the results.

Ambassador Barnes corroborated this report and determined that it was a plausible threat. So on the Sunday before the election he had the Chilean ambassador to the U.S. called in. Our officials in Washington told the envoy bluntly that if anything happened to disrupt the election, the U.S. president would denounce it in the loudest possible terms around the world and that nothing of that kind would be tolerated. Apparently, our counter-threat was effective. We later heard from members of the junta that the stop-the-election plan was real. Another decisive moment happened when the first election results came in. Sergio Jarpa, the leader of the conservative National party and a previous supporter of Pinochet, went public and stated that the no vote had won. Junta members Stange and Matthei also said so publicly.

Q: I'm told this screwed up the plans at Pinochet headquarters.

ROE: That killed any possibility of them subverting the process.

Q: Well, then what happened after that?

ROE: After the election? There was a joyous feeling of release and celebration nationwide. People felt that Chile had been saved from a terrible path of social and political warfare that would permanently scar the society. The talk turned to reconciliation - what would happen when they finally return to democratic government, could unearth the truth about the dirty war, and take steps to heal the wounds. Pinochet conceded in a dazed, semi-defiant, somewhat disoriented speech.

Chileans began planning for the national elections in December of '89. Concertación candidate Patricio Aylwin (Christian Democrats) won decisively, heading the first democratically elected government in 16 years. At that point you had an outpouring of positive energy. People felt they had begun to overcome the darkest part of their recent history. The opposition leaders wanted the world to know they were not about vengeance or divisiveness. They didn't act triumphant, because no one, not even the old-line communists, wanted the country to suffer more suicidal feuding. Pinochet had received forty-four to their fifty-six percent in the plebiscite. He remained as army commander. His constitution set strong limits on the democratic process. A portion of the Congress was appointed, and the President could not remove the Commander in Chief of the Armed Forces.

Q: I take it that you were busy making contacts all over.

ROE: Things opened up. Many of my key contacts for example Andres Allemand, Marcelo Rojas, Herald Munoz, Carlos Portales, Jorge and Monica Jimenez, Tomas Puig - entered the government or the parliament after the 1989 elections.

Four years in Chile provided a unique opportunity to set down roots and develop lifelong friendships. Marie Snyder (now Cavanagh), was librarian at the American school, Nido de Aguilas. When her parents visited Chile, we traveled with them to Punta Arenas and Torres de Paine, an incredible World Heritage site in the south that contains glaciers and flamingos within the same national park. Another time Marie and I explored the Valle del Elqui in the north and visited a monastery that seemed lost in time. This is the narrow valley where many reported UFO sightings have happened. The poet and diplomat Gabriela Mistral - the first in Latin America to win a Nobel Prize for literature was born there. Pancho Ingunza, a decorator and arts empresario, and Jutta Gaviria, a German designer, were close friends who opened many doors. John Acton, the DCM for the Australian Embassy in Santiago, was another inspired buddy we took tango lessons together, and he later visited us in the U.S. and Budapest.

Chile remains a big part of my life because I have family ties as well. In late 1988 I became engaged to a Chilean, Hector Bravo Zugaza. We had to go through a mountain of red tape to get Department approval. After the wedding in February '89, we started the immigration process. That was another transformation in a year full of them.

We were married in Hector's hometown, Nuevo Imperial, in a ceremony attended by his extended family and childhood friends, my older sister Becky and her husband Andy from Colorado, the political counselor Ron Godard and his family, Heather Walker (British) and Yolande Osten (Dutch). Hector's mother Nila was there, along with six of his siblings, twenty-one of her grandchildren and many neighbors. My close Chilean friends - Pancho Ingunza and Felipe Gopeigui - decorated the banquet hall. The town had only one restaurant and no hotel, so arrangements were quite a challenge. Hector's uncle Juan donated the beef from his farm. A firefighter friend was chef, serving a four course meal. We were setting up until an hour before the ceremony.

Q: Tell me more about Hector.

ROE: He was on the Embassy security staff when we met. He did advance work for Ambassador Barnes and had been in the Carabineros (national police) for six years before that. Hector was born in the south of Chile near Temuco in the Ninth Region. This was Indian country, a rural area that was ninety-five percent Mapuche. He went to a bi-lingual school started by a Mapuche schoolteacher and activist, Carlos Santibañez. His parents were small farmers who took care of the pine plantations for the larger landholders and later for the government. His father, Guillermo Bravo Leal, was the voluntary veterinarian for all the neighboring farms. He died in 1977, the same year as my father. Hector had thirteen brothers and sisters, and four half-brothers and sisters. His mother, Nila Zúñiga, was madrina (godmother) for half of the province. One brother, Ramon, still lives in the family farm. Until recently, the house had no indoor plumbing or electricity. Water came from a hand-drawn well. The homestead lies about an hour from town by dirt road, set among rolling green hills.

Hector and I met when I asked for someone from Diplomatic Security to accompany me to a población (slum) outside Santiago called Cardinal Fresno. I needed to go there to meet a family whose son was bitten by Bronco, the nine-year old German shepherd I'd just adopted. I paid the mother a hefty indemnity. She and her other children had nothing but a roof and a dirt floor. They depended on her son's work at the local market. They were grateful for the visit and the money. It was a look behind the scenes at the hard luck base of Chile's resistance movement. The población was off limits to official Santiago. None of Pinochet's army or police would venture there. But Hector had worked in rougher areas as a police officer, and neither of us felt any tension being there.

Hector and I share an interest in Mapuche culture, their history, community rituals, ceremonial music, healing practices. One of Hector's aunts, Tũ̃a Juana, married a Mapuche and ran her own farm. In her 50s she became a one-woman hospice and continued doing that work for nearly a half a century. When someone was terminally ill and dying, the family would summon her to help them make the passage peacefully. Juana is buried in a Mapuche cemetery near the family homestead and the locals consider her a saint. Hector's childhood gave him the taste for living in two cultures the Embassy was a third. He looked forward to exploring the land of Israel. But he never left his home behind. Many a morning I wake up to hear Hector recounting the latest stories from his sister Natalia or his brother Ramon; a prayer or song from his childhood; the names and family lines of neighboring Mapuche machis (medicine women) and matriarchs; or country legends like the ghost fox, the Tuĩ̃ Tuĩ̃, the spirit owl, the night fireballs. He has a detective's eye for details and my mother's gift for remembering relationships. He never fails to stop on the highway to help a stranger with a car breakdown or to rescue an injured animal or bird.

Before turning to Israel, two stories. One happened in September 1988, just before the Chilean plebiscite. Nancy Mason, a new political/military officer, had just arrived at post. Around 5 p.m., most of the political section vacated - a pro-Pinochet demonstration was scheduled to take place a half hour later at La Moneda palace, just up the street from the Embassy. I was finishing a cable and told Nancy, "No problem, I'll take you." We left fifteen minutes later but to our dismay, we saw the large crowd fleeing in panic toward Avenida O'Higgins, the main thoroughfare in downtown Santiago. "Don't worry," I told Nancy, "we'll take the metro home." But the metro was closed. As people ran up main street, we felt like we'd hit a wall. It was a wall of tear gas. We escaped to the side streets but still couldn't see our way out. Eventually a stranger offered to give us a ride home, and we followed him thinking there was strength in numbers two of us against him if necessary. When we got in his Peugeot, he showed us the chains and revolver he stashed on the passenger side of the front seat. "I'm one of the counter-demonstrators," he proudly said. So a Pinochet partisan took us home that night, all because I'd boasted, "no problem."

Another indelible memory is the night of the October 1988 plebiscite. Ambassador Barnes had confronted Pinochet's envoys on the issue of a staged disruption. During the day the political section and other officers monitored different polling places. A big international observer corps was already in place the Europeans, the National Endowment for Democracy, the National Republican Institute, the National Democratic Institute and hundreds of journalists. Ron Godard, the new political counselor, had put together a briefing manual for those observers and was coordinating Embassy responses. By the afternoon, spot checks indicated the election was proceeding peacefully, but no one knew how the government would deal with the results. That evening, I was the only officer covering the election from outside the Embassy. I went from political party headquarters to headquarters, taking the temperature, talking with party activists.

I was at the Christian Democratic headquarters when conservative leader Sergio Jarpa announced that he accepted the election results. There was an outburst of joy. Shortly afterward, Air Force Commander General Matthei followed suit, legitimizing the returns. The government had blockaded routes within the city center, making it nearly impossible to circulate within Santiago. However the Embassy driver was undeterred. We talked our way past five of the police barricades, making up many different stories that I was sick and had to reach my doctor, or I needed to deliver a message from the U.S. Ambassador to someone in the headquarters, and so on. I arrived at the opposition's central command on Avenida Alemeda just as the Coordinadora burst into cheers over the news that the election results were irreversible. I remember giving Lagos a hug.

Q: Turning to Israel now, you were there from when to when?

ROE: I was in Israel from August 1989 to July 1990, when I took another hard-to-fill assignment in Colombia. I arrived in Tel Aviv after a month of area studies at FSI.

Q: Your job was what?

ROE: I was labor attaché ½.

Q: Who was the Ambassador at that time?

ROE: William Brown was Ambassador and Mark Parris was deputy Chief of Mission. Mike Metrisko, the consul general, had been one of the hostages in Tehran during the Iranian revolution.

Q: Now, how would you put the status of American-Israeli relations when you arrived?

ROE: Israeli-U.S. relations have been intertwined since the creation of the State of Israel in 1948. The U.S. is Israel's largest trading partner. We carry out joint military planning exercises. We have cooperative institutions in many scientific and technical areas. The political and cultural ties are so close we sometimes seem like members of the same family. Tel Aviv is one of the "special relationship" posts like Mexico City and London where you have a galaxy of eyes watching everything you do, and the policy is mostly determined out of Washington.

Q: While you were there, what were our interests in the labor movement?

ROE: Histadrut (the Israeli labor federation) has been a major player in the country's economy and political landscape since the earliest days of nation-building. It's a trade union and social movement, but also the largest employer after the government. Histadrut has operated the largest industrial conglomerates, the second largest bank, the transportation and building trades and insurance enterprises. Several of these firms including Koor were in fiscal crisis. Histadrut ran the biggest national health care and day care services. It coordinated the agricultural cooperativethe iconic kibbutzim and moshaviwhich were also facing tough times. Its regional institutes cultivate strong connections with developing countries especially in Africa and Latin America. In 1989 the federation represented nearly 60 percent of the adult population. Its 1.6 million members included 247,000 Israeli Arabs and Druze. Some 15 percent of the Histadrut are non-Jews. Housewives belong as well as students.

Q: You didn't have to have a job to join it.

ROE: It's like a big tent. The day workers who come from Gaza and the West Bank pay discounted Histadrut dues and are entitled to representation on the job, but since they're not legal residents, they couldn't be members. The federation mirrors Israeli society and consciousness. Shortly after I arrived, I monitored the Histadrut national elections in November 1989. Israeli political parties contested the elections to Histadrut's leadership conference as well as to the 72 local labor councils. These contests were closely watched as a bellwether for the parliamentary elections of 1990. I recruited Aubrey Hooks, the top econ officer, to join me in covering the balloting. He's a Hebrew speaker, and the process fascinated him.

Q: Whither Aubrey Hooks?

ROE: The Hooks were my sponsors in Tel Aviv. Aubrey went on to be consul general and DCM in Warsaw and is currently Ambassador in Azerbaijan.

Q: What was your impression of this labor federation? You have something that's a huge organization, delving into all sorts of social activities. How effective is it and how bureaucratic has it become and does it deliver?

ROE: When Labor Zionists led by David Ben-Gurion developed a centralized economic infrastructure to support the new state of Israel, they made Histadrut into a quasi-state institution. Over time the organization had become ossified and deeply indebted. Histadrut General Secretary Israel Kessar was a Labor Party leader and a member of the Knesset (Israeli Parliament). Going to call on him was almost like calling on the president of the country. Kessar was an Israeli Yemenite, the first non-Ashkenazi to be elected to this key position. He and many of his officers didn't speak English. I hadn't received Hebrew training, except for a few classes I took at the end of my tour in Santiago. At formal meetings we spoke through an interpreter, who often put his own spin on the conversation. My position was not language-designated, and I strongly recommended that this be changed. Later it was.

Q: Was there a reason for this? Was Histadrut a stronghold of the Zionist movement?

ROE: Historically, yes. The old guard of Histadrut was the successor generation to the Mapai, the Zionist father of the modern Labor party. You had interlocking directorates between Mapai and Histadrut, although this started to break down in the 1970s and 80s. Labor was losing its hegemony as the dominant political party with successive waves of Sephardic immigrants. Unlike the Ashkenazim, the Sephardim were not from northern and eastern Europe and Russia. Many are descended from Jews who were exiled from Spain in the 1400s and settled in Turkey, southeastern Europe, North Africa and other Middle Eastern countries.

Q: Such as Yemen and Morocco-

ROE: Yes. Originally, Ashkenazi meant a person who spoke Yiddish, a dialect of German, and Sephardim meant someone who spoke Ladino, the ancient Judeo-Spanish dialect. Many of the older generation still converse in Ladino. It's a beautiful language that helped my husband and I connect with many Israelis of this heritage.

Histadrut was like an overgrown, paternalistic company. Like Israel itself, it was troubled, defensive, fractious, composed of hundreds of little kiosks run by resourceful technicians, intellectuals and political survivors who are internationalists at heart. One of the more interesting parts of Histadrut is its African institute that has trained local activists and supports local movements for democratic change throughout the continent. Histadrut was crying out for reform. In June 1989, the federation approved a reform blueprint written by Professor Avraham Friedman that called for privatizing many of the Histadrut-owned enterprises and building a more horizontal, democratic trade union structure. Not surprisingly, implementation of the plan was stalled.

Another thorny issue was the relationship of Histadrut to West Bank and Gaza workers. Before my assignment, the Department raised the idea of a dialogue with Palestinian unions, an issue that previous labor attachés apparently saw as the kiss of death. My trade union experience gave me confidence in encouraging the initiative within Histadrut, but naturally there was resistance. Israel Kessar took the stance that "we can't meet with them because the law says no dealings with the PLO (Palestine Liberation Organization)." He took it for granted that any Palestinian union leader would be part of the political structure and not independent. Now, West Bank and Gaza workers in Israel were charged a 1 percent agency fee in exchange for getting union contract and grievance representation. In practice they received little protection. Unofficially, Histadrut officers acknowledged that this was a compelling reason for dialogue.

In March 1990 Tony Freeman, State's Special Assistant for Labor Affairs, visited Israel to initiate the first high-level Department contact with Palestinian unions. We coordinated the trip with the U.S. Consulate General in Jerusalem. Our encounters with leaders of the West Bank Palestinian Trade Union Federation (WBPFTU) were memorable. In Nablus, we observed a hotly contested local union election in a shoe factory and later met with WBPFTU leader Shahir Saad, whose organization was founded in 1920. Saad, who defined himself as a moderate, appreciated the chance to open a new door. We asked why he affiliated with the ICFTU (International Confederation of Free Trade Unions) instead of the WFTUF (the communist-oriented World Federation of Trade Unions). He said it was the only way to go, because the ICFTU stands for democratic trade unionism and peaceful social change. Saad's action's supported this stance.

At the time, Saad was restricted by a travel ban. After the visit, I wrote Histadrut asking for their help in lifting the ban. In August 1990, Histadrut set up a legal aid office for workers from the occupied territories. Within the next year, the Israeli ban on contacts with the PLO was lifted, and Histadrut began a dialogue with the WBPFTU. I counted these small steps as an important gain in Israel.

An aside - Tony Freeman later served as Director of ILO's Washington office from 1994-2004. In that capacity, and after his retirement, I worked closely with him on many issues including labor standards in trade legislation and worker rights in Cuba. He never lost his zeal in fighting for working people and defending their freedom to contract and speak truth to power. Tony passed recently - a shock and sorrow to everyone who knew him and his joie de vivre. He was a mentor, a friend, a hero to me.

Q: Did you have the feeling that our labor policy and labor attachés had been a little too much in the pocket of the Israelis, and so this opening up to these others, they say well, you can do it but imply that we'd rather you didn't. I'm just wondering whether or not you got that feeling.

ROE: It's clear I was skating into unknown territory. Histadrut's leaders assume you are on their side. When you raise new ideas, such as the need for dialogue with the West Bank & Gaza trade unionists, you need to be very insistent that you're speaking for the U.S. government. Whether in an informal lunch meeting with Israel Kessar and his colleagues or an official state visit, every word is carefully weighed and registered.

The Middle Eastern area studies program at FSI helped me do some soul-searching. I identified strongly with the Jewish experience. In 1974, a year after the Yom Kippur war, when I first visited Israel, it was a different country. Back then I had wondered if the U.S. policy of even-handedness was fair, and if we shouldn't do more to support Israel. Then in 1989 I read Tom Friedman's book *From Beirut to Jerusalem*. The book and my Israel experience were eye-openers. Twenty-three years of occupation had transformed the country. Both Israelis and Palestinians seemed to be living on a knife's edge. The U.S. wants to be an honest broker in the conflict, but we lose that standing when we don't engage consistently. It's difficult to discuss the issues fairly when AIPAC is such a powerful influence on the Congress and the news media.

Q: This is the American Israeli Political Action Committee-

ROE: AIPAC is very vocal, well organized, single-minded and nationalistic. Many believe this lobby does not speak for the mainstream of American Jewry. Its saber-rattling hurts those in Israel and the U.S. trying to work for peaceful solutions. I worked with many U.S.-based Jewish organizations in Israel who are quite critical of AIPAC's role. The situation with Histadrut is different. They're dedicated marketeers. The Israeli labor attaché<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub> in Washington offered Hector a job as an auto mechanic before he got there. The only hitch is that the government wouldn't give him a work permit even though the U.S. grants work permits to family members of Israeli diplomats hassle-free under our reciprocity agreement. That was a telling glimpse into the country's bureaucratic labyrinth. Instead, Hector worked for the Colombian ambassador, Edmundo Esquinazi. Esquinazi was a self-made millionaire, a Turkish-born Sephardic Jew who found Israeli culture and business dealings to be challenging in extremis. He was generous with his staff, and couldn't do enough for Hector.

Q: In a way, you've got two masters. You've got the State Department. You also have to a certain extent the American labor movement.

ROE: The Department sets the policy, but labor has historically had a strong and respected voice in this area and human rights in general.

Q: The American labor movement particularly at the top and certainly at intellectual levels has a very strong Jewish participation. This goes back from the very beginning of labor history. Did you find that the Jewish element within the labor movement had a thrust that was different than AIPAC or was it a creature of AIPAC?

ROE: The AFL-CIO is no pawn of AIPAC, and I've always felt that Jewish intellectual input in labor in any organization is a real strength. Under AFL-CIO presidents Meany and Kirkland and now Sweeney, American labor has been very engaged on the Israel issue. This stems from labor's World War II era efforts to help resettle and rescue refugees, especially those threatened by the Holocaust. My experience gave me the sense that the occupation was eroding Israel's identity. Not many in the AFL-CIO leadership shared that view, but then again, American labor is not monolithic.

Shortly before my assignment started, the CWA (the Communication Workers International union) planned to hold a meeting in Jerusalem. CWA requested my participation. Our consul general in Jerusalem said if I attended it would imply U.S. support for moving the Embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem (a long-standing Israeli goal). I quickly learned how sensitive these issues can be. AFL-CIO doesn't heed those nuances.

Q: Did they have a meeting in Jerusalem?

ROE: They went ahead, but I couldn't go, and since no one attended from the consulate, it went unreported.

Q: What about the contacts in Gaza and the West Bank. Is this more or a less the realm of our consulate general in Jerusalem? Was this strictly off limits for you?

ROE: It wasn't my usual area, but I visited the West Bank and Gaza on several occasions. The Arabic-speaking human rights officer, John Chamberlain, covered Gaza from Tel Aviv. I coordinated my activities and reporting with respect to West Bank unions with the consulate. Relations with the consul general (CG) were testy at first, because I started out by pressing for answers concerning the CWA initiative. But I understood their concerns, and soon developed a closer relationship with the CG.

Q: Who was that?

ROE: Phil Wilcox - a very knowledgeable, straight-talking diplomat. He's now working with the Foundation for Middle East Peace.

Q: Did you get a feel for how Arabs were treated in West Bank and Gaza?

ROE: Yes. The intifada (the Palestinian uprising against the occupation) began in the late 1980s, adding fuel to an already grim, conflictive situation. In 1990 over 100,000 Arab workers from the occupied territories worked in Israel. Their labor rights were barely protected and their movements frequently restricted for security reasons. Arab labor contributed to Israel's prosperity. Palestinians watched the growth of Israeli settlements that lock in the occupation, making them exiles from their own land. More are turning to the politics of vengeance.

Israeli Arabs have their own political parties in the Knesset and their own caucus within the Labor Party. They comprise nearly twenty percent of the population and make up over fifteen percent of Histadrut membership. The U.S. Information Service (USIS) had a traveling library that regularly visited Arab villages in Israel. They would invite me to talk on safety net programs in the U.S., how the social security system works, the status of Arab-Americans in the U.S., and other socio-economic issues. Back then, most Israeli Arabs had a cordial regard for the U.S. and some understanding of our role in the Middle East. They identified with the Palestinian cause, but felt rooted in Israel. They faced a lot of discrimination, and their towns had scant resources. Arab-speaking and Jewish children could not attend school together.

Richard Israelovitch, the senior social scientist at Beersheba University, invited me to visit the campus. Richard directed the Israeli bird watching society and also headed the Hubert Humphrey Institute at the university. His associate, Ismael Abu Saad, was the only Bedouin in Israel to earn a post-doctoral degree. Ismael's wife Kathy was a leader in the human rights association fighting for the rights of Bedouins. Hector and I went to Abu Saad's brother's wedding during our last weekend in Israel and observed something I'll never forget. When we arrived at the wedding which was in a small town near Beersheba, we saw a lot of camels in a tiny plot. Their owners, who were relatives of the Saads, had a parcel of land to the south of Tel Aviv. The husband was doing business outside of Tel Aviv, and his wife was manning their shop in the market near where they lived. Without warning, the Israeli "green police" came along and forced them to take all their animals and return to their relatives' place in Beersheba. The authorities claimed the family had no rights to the land, even though they owned clear title. The Israelis not only forcefully moved them, but also make them pay exorbitantly for the transportation of the camels and other livestock. Near the wedding site we also saw some olive trees, and learned that those too were condemned to be destroyed by the state. The Israelis regularly uproot the olive trees that are not grown expressly with their permission. These cases go through the courts, but very slowly.

Q: Of course it takes a decade to get a decision.

ROE: About as long as it takes an olive tree to grow in the desert. Then the authorities make the farmers pay for the uprooting equipment on top of the indignity and economic damage they've experienced. The Israelis are proud of making the desert bloom, but in carrying out these policies they destroy a precious natural resource on which people depend. The irony is that Bedouins played key roles in several Israeli victories against the Arab states. These policies seem guaranteed to turn them into enemies.

Q: Well, I wondered, you had two things going for somebody who was in Israel, an American. One you have this natural affinity towards Israeli, plucky little state, very modern, with the terrible experience of the Holocaust as a backdrop. Politically it's dynamite if you try to oppose it, but the other, but on the other hand you've got this problem of the Israelis being beastly to the Arabs. I mean one can't help but think of South Africa in the time of apartheid. The other one is that Israel seems to be able to lead the United States along by a leash practically when because of the political clout within the American political system.

ROE: What I witnessed was a state of mutual fear, stoked by the Palestinians' blind support for violent solutions and Israeli's exercise of lordly might. The government of Israel effectively plays our system and knows our weaknesses, but we're responsible for our mistakes. Our Congressional leaders seem to assume that unless we stand pat, everything will fall apart. But Israel has grown beyond its infancy. Some of the most astute commentators I found were in military intelligencemen like Efraim Halevy, who headed the Mossad from 1998-2003. They saw the deadly consequences of continuing the status quo with the occupied territories. Americans feel ambivalent about Israel loving its can-do spirit and heroic accomplishments but uncomfortable with its present. Israelis seem even more divided about their role. They've been heatedly debating the issue for years, without fear of censorship. Take the question of the billion dollar blank check the U.S. writes to Israel each year. Many Israelis feel this aid is corrupting their country from within, creating dependencies, postponing hard decisions about internal reforms. Yet it continues because U.S. policymakers can't bring themselves to question the process.

I saw Israelis struggling with the implications of being an occupying country. An Israeli think tank called the West Bank Data Project did excellent research on policies that could change the equation with the Palestinians. They criticized Israel's post-statehood practice of changing place names to eradicate any history of Palestinian settlement. Attorney General Michael Ben-Yair wrote that after the Six-Day War that Israel "enthusiastically chose to become a colonial society, ignoring international treaties, expropriating land, transferring settlers from Israel to the occupied territories, engaging in theft and finding justification for all these activities." Excessively strong words, maybe - but most Israelis found that living through the ethnic conflict created a constant tension, like a fault line forming under the simplest of everyday interactions.

Israel's technocratic and business leaders also understood their country couldn't sustain growth in a climate of Balkan-style ethnic conflict. After two decades on the margins, the peace movement was gaining mainstream potency. Some of those participating were industrial leaders and military leaders, including prominent women army officers who simply could not justify Israel's foreign policy. This was no bedraggled minority. Not long after I left Yitzhak Rabin became Prime Minister, raising hopes for reform.

Q: Did you find that you were working more in conjunction with the human rights officer at the Embassy than maybe at some other place?

ROE: I would have liked to see closer cooperation between the human rights and labor functions. I had more support from the economic section and USIS, which were less fragmented and closed off than the political section. The political counselor, John Becker and the deputy polcon, Ted Feifer, were savvy, thoughtful officers, both very different in style but great colleagues. The problem was structural. We were like a microcosm of Israel's splintered bureaucracy. We worked in a section of Tel Aviv that used to be the red light district. It was a little slum of a chancery, and when I asked if it had always been this way, many would say, "Oh, we hardly notice, because we came from Embassy Moscow, which is the real pits." Each part of the political section was locked off in a separate office. These were the last years of the WANG operating system. To send a classified cable, you had to lock your office, go into the main political section and enter a cold storage room that looked like a NASA (National Air and Space Administration) command center. To shut it down took about twenty-five operations at night. This setup and the frenetic climate of Tel Aviv impacted the work environment. One Israeli contact told me that living there was like being on an electric shock bed.

Q: Were you there long enough to feel the results of President George H.W. Bush's attempt to curb the settlements movement and loan guarantees?

ROE: The U.S. was clearly putting pressure on the Israelis. It was a stark contrast from what we have seen under George W. Bush, who in effect gave a green light to settlements. The Administration exerted its financial leverage to deter the settlements. I think Israelis got the message. George H.W. Bush, the father, took the view that Israelis were sabotaging themselves with the settlement activity and losing their international credibility. Israelis pushed back hard; still, they understood our need to play an independent role. But the assassination of Yitzhak Rabin shattered the peace effort and traumatized the Israeli reform movement. The revelation that his killer was a right-wing Israeli fanatic shocked the national psyche. That wound has yet to heal.

Q: What about Russian immigrant? Was that that affecting the labor movement?

ROE: Immigration affected everyone. Israelis were making heroic efforts to absorb the rising stream of immigrants. Soviet immigration reached record number 184,000 in 1990, up from 13,000 the previous year. The government and Histadrut were preparing for another wave of immigrants from Ethiopia. They were processing newcomers in huge absorption centers, providing Hebrew literacy, cultural orientation and training for the job market. The incorporation of what would be a million more immigrants by the mid-1990's was a huge challenge. Unemployment was increasing. It had reached a twenty year high of 9.6 percent in 1990. But somehow the Israeli economy managed to absorb that great immigrant wave. It's a high tech economy, and the Israeli safety net and brainpower resources make the system resilient. The immigrants generated new demands and new jobs. Still, Ethiopians face discrimination in the workplace. Those of Jewish descent were called Falashas (outsiders) in Ethiopia. Many who came to Israel still felt like outsiders.

Q: How did you view the action of the religious parties, the orthodox and ultra-orthodox? Were they much of a factor?

ROE: They're part of a deep divide in Israeli political life. Because of this polarization, no party can get a majority. Labor Zionism made the State of Israel into a kind of civil religion. The new religious part like Shas - looks down on secularism. They want to enthrone their view of traditional Judaism within the state and implicitly press a relentless territorial agenda. The ultranationalist religious have weight beyond their numbers, and some of the fringe groups are really fanatic. These zealots connect the settlement of the West Bank to the Biblical Judea and Samaria to the advent of the Messiah. Their pursuit of a theocracy parallels the goals of the Islamic jihadists. In one neighborhood, shortly after I arrived, a kiosk owner sold newspapers that offended one religious party. Party supporters burned down his store and killed him. This ultranationalist movement gave rise to a terrorist underground that carried out several attacks on West Bank Arab mayors in the 1980's. They planned to destroy the Dome of the Rock mosque in Jerusalem. This fervor led to the assassination of Yitzhak Rabin, opening the way to the collapse of the peace process and the second intifada in 2000.

Q: Do they play much of a role within the labor movement?

ROE: Their presence made the Labor party leadership of Histadrut walk on eggshells with respect to certain social issues. Their numbers were growing, but still low. During the November 1989 elections, the Labor list won 55 percent. Kessar drew on a few of the more moderate religious parties for his winning coalition. Likud won only 27 percent, just short of the 30 percent it would take to get a seat on the executive board.

Q: Well, having this huge bureaucracy did you miss the traditional labor leader, the guy or gal who was going out there organizing as you had been doing?

ROE: Israel is not a place where union advocates do much traditional organizing. Histadrut is embedded in local communities, because of the multiple services it offers and its history. It's not perceived as a separate, underdog movement like its counterpart in the U.S. For me, the best times were visiting the small towns and the touring that Hector and I did in our spare moments. I'll never forget the way the Sephardim immigrants from Morocco and Yemen opened their homes to strangers on Passover and the joy with which they rekindled their traditions. Or the beauty of Safed, the Sea of Galilee and the archeological treasures in out of the way places. I think Hector had the best of our stay there every few days he would accompany Ambassador Esquinazi to Jerusalem, and he saw more of the countryside through his job.

Q: Were there other major events while you were there?

ROE: I recall one spring day that rocked Tel Aviv and the American communities. At dawn on May 30, PLO terrorists launched a mini-tanker with half a dozen speedboats from Libya in an effort to attack Tel Aviv's town hall and beachfront hotels. Five of them attempted to board the beach at Herzliya, the suburban township where we lived.

Q: What happened to the raid?

ROE: A Navy gun boat patrolling off Tel Aviv spotted the first boat and made the raiders surrender. Then the Air Force, Navy and police went on high alert. The IDF killed several raiders and rounded up the rest employing attack helicopters and spotter planes. The Israelis had apparently had some advance warning, much earlier, but without specifics. The terrorist also had problems with several of their boats breaking down. As the IDF (Israeli Defense Force) was counter-attacking, the RSO whisked off U.S. Ambassador Brown to safety. However, the Embassy took no steps to warn American citizens away from the beach or protect them. This generated angry responses from several diplomats' families, including the economic counselor. Israelis were also shocked. Few had imagined the beaches would be a front line in the intifada.

This took place as I was being reassigned to Colombia. In April I bid on the labor counselor vacancy in Mexico, a senior position. Ambassador Brown wrote a cable supporting my bid. U.S. Ambassador to Mexico John Negroponte backed me. I was about to be paneled, but the Director General nixed the assignment because it was a two grade hike. Then our DCM called from Bogotá. The deputy political counselor had become a hard to fill position, because families had been evacuated in 1989 due to terrorist threats. Even though families were returning, officers were reluctant to sign on because they knew the security situation could change again. Colombia was gearing up for a constituent assembly which could have a big impact on the country's future and U.S. policy interests. Monitoring the assembly would be my main focus. So I took that assignment.

Q: Then you went to Colombia. You were there from when to when?

ROE: I was there from July 1990 to August 1992.

Q: Who was our ambassador in Colombia at the time?

ROE: Ted McNamara. He was succeeded by Martin Busby. The DCM was David Hodges. Janet Crist was the political counselor. Phil French and I served as deputy counselors. Matt Kaplan and Phil Goldberg were junior political officers.

Q: What was the situation in Colombia when you got there in 1990?

ROE: The climate was a bit spooky. Embassy staff left for work in an armored vehicle with an armed follow car in a shifting schedule that would range from five to eight in the morning. The guards got out at every stop and flaunted their machine guns. Ironically, if we went home late, we were on our own. So more often than not I took public transportation home. Go figure! Colombia had its share of upheavals. Luis Carlos Galíndez, a beloved reformer and the leading candidate for President, had just been assassinated on the campaign trail. He was a Robert Kennedy type figure. Cesar Gaviria, Galíndez's campaign manager, was elected President the summer I arrived. Pablo Escobar had not yet been taken prisoner-

Q: The drug lord.

ROE: Himself. The drug cartels of Medellin and Cali had tremendous power. The guerilla movement the FARC (Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia) and the ELN (Ejercito de Liberación Nacional) controlled significant parts of the countryside. The M-19 (Movimiento 19 de Abril) and the EPL (Ejercito Popular de Liberación) responded to the peace overture of the previous government to lay down their arms and become part of the political process. They were both small movements. The M-19 achieved dark fame with its bloody seizure of the Palace of Justice in 1985. They moderated their actions after 1987 and eventually became seriously engaged in the political process. I'd been exposed to little positive about Colombia before moving there, but the country grew on me. Colombians, like Chileans, are highly educated. Their intelligentsia has strong ties with Western Europe, particularly Spain. The government's common cause with the U.S. in battling the drug lords created new connections.

Q: What was the labor movement situation?

ROE: The trade union movement was weak and highly politicized. A relatively larger confederation, the CUT (Central Unitario Colombiano), included the main political tendencies as well as the small Communist party. Of the two smaller confederations, one had a fairly close relationship with the AFL-CIO. The Embassy had no contact with the CUT. There was a modest-sized AIFLD (American Institute for Free Labor Development) project with an able Colombian coordinator, Guillermo Virracachi. Guillermo had informal relations with all the confederations. Unfortunately, the leaders of the federation in AFL-CIO's sphere were patriarchal and most likely had ties to the drug mafia. Instead, I cultivated close contacts with the CUT. When I traveled to the provinces or explored a labor issue, their affiliates would often be helpful. The CUT secretary general, Jorge Castillo, later became the chief labor advisor to Alvaro Uribe. Our central concerns were the endemic violence in the labor sector, the blacklisting and lack of protection for those trying to organize, and widespread discrimination against women workers and other minorities, including Afro-Colombians and indigenous workers. We also worked with industrial relations experts and human resource officers to help promote best practices in labor-management cooperation.

President Gaviria's boldest initiative was a participatory movement to rewrite Colombia's constitution for the first time in 105 years. This was a risky venture with major implications for U.S. extradition policy as well as for Colombia's chances for political stability and a whole subset of social equity issues. The U.S. was worried the drug lords would seize control of the process.

Elections to the Constituent Assembly took place in the fall of 1990. The delegates were everyone from poets to housewives to people to new political party activists, ex-guerrillas, magistrates, peasants, journalists, trade unionists, indigenous tribal leaders - a potpourri of Colombian society. The process was wide open. Alvaro Uribe, then an independent Liberal Party Senator who chaired the Labor and Social Welfare committee, was in the thick of things. Uribe, who later was twice elected President of Colombia, was relatively unknown to Washington. But he was a strategic player and astute observer of the Constituent Assembly and became my closest contact. Fernando Carillo, who later became Colombia's youngest justice minister, was another key delegate. Others included young reformers like liberal Senator Fernando Botero and Eduardo Verano de la Rosa and ex-guerrillas like Angelino Garzón of the M-19 (later a Labor Minister under Uribe). I worked closely with Ana Maria Salazar, a gifted Mexican-American attorney and AID contractor who steered the Agency's justice reform project. Following this stint, she became Deputy Assistance Secretary in the Defense Department, and is now teaching in Mexico. During the AC we compared notes on a daily basis.

Once elected, the Constituyentes (delegates) got right to work. January '91 began eight months of intense negotiations. The new constitution prohibited discrimination against women workers, child labor, indigenous peoples and other minorities. It incorporated the ratified ILO conventions and recognized the right to strike for non-essential public employees. A fairly comprehensive labor code reform passed in 1990 increased the fines for interference with trade union activity -

Q: How open were the delegates to this convention to you?

ROE: Many were glad to talk. We were up front about U.S. concerns. We weren't trying to twist arms. We kept our distance when sensitive issues were on the table. But we could follow what was happening. Colombians love to debate. They will open up to someone who grasps something of their history and appreciates the risks they confront. A lot of people who don't understand Colombia wonder why they don't-

Q: Stand up to the drug lords?

ROE: Well, they do. After the most egregious assassinations, Colombians turned out in huge demonstrations demanding peace. They were saying "stop the violence." Many would take risks we couldn't imagine. A prosecutor, judge, journalist, mayor or independent political figure realized that any point he or she could be kidnapped or knocked off, and that happened with grim frequency. They saw colleagues gunned down doing their work, some right in the halls of the university. Business people pooled their resources for rescue funds because they were kidnapped so frequently.

Q: Looking at the issue of extradition to the United States, I take it we were pushing this because if a Colombian drug person was involved in pushing stuff to the United States, once they got into American jail, it was going to put a crimp in that export. How did this play in Colombia?

ROE: This was a heated issue in the Constituent Assembly. We lost ground, though less than anticipated; several years later Colombia passed legislation legalizing extradition again. Attitudes were shifting. Colombians were becoming more conscious of the social costs of drug addiction and cocaine production, particularly as it affects Colombian youth, rural communities, and the economy as a whole. There's widespread skepticism whether we're using the right approach to the problem. One U.S. officer directing the Embassy's anti-narcotics program acknowledged that if we spent a portion of the drug war budget on programs to help get homeless kids off the streets of Bogotá<sup>1/2</sup> and on rehabilitation in the U.S., it would generate far better results. As long as the U.S. and European demand for drugs keeps up, the trade may shift geographically, but it will stay alive and healthy.

Q: This is a common complaint and a perfectly valid one.

ROE: In the end prohibition never works, it just increases the street price and the Mafia's power. But politically, the more holistic solutions you see in countries like the Netherlands are dead on arrival in our Congress. Many Colombians see the issue as a struggle to ensure that drug lords don't own large sections of the country, that guerillas and paramilitaries don't destroy the countryside through constant violence and counter violence. They're trying to come out of a very dark period. Inside the labor community, I found common ground on issues where the U.S. is trying to advance worker rights and human rights implementation. The paramilitary groups are a major threat. Hundreds of trade unionists have been murdered and disappeared since the mid-90s by groups with shadowy ties to local and national security forces.

Q: Were you able to get out much around Medellin and Cali?

ROE: I traveled whenever possible to the hinterlands, but not to Cali. Once I joined Ambassador McNamara on a trip to Medellin, the first visit a U.S. chief of mission had made there in over a decade. I set up a separate schedule of meetings. Alvaro Uribe's close friend Antonio Yepes Parra, a former Antioquian governor, medical doctor and constituyente, met us in the mayor's office, and took me around in his beat-up car to meet local council delegates, employers, academics, and other civil society organizations. I felt safer than if I had gone in an Embassy van. Medellin is a beautiful, haunting city that was just starting to regain its footing. Unemployment was high<sup>14</sup> percent and the government was beginning to do something about the decrepit public education system.

Hector and I traveled a lot in our free time. We visited Villa de Leyba, a colonial city that takes you back in time, where dinosaur bones crop up on the outskirts of town. We loved Cartagena, the walled colonial city on the Atlantic that's very Caribbean in feeling but also struggling with strapped schools and a grim job market. Bucaramanga, where the Embassy had a binational center, also saw significant guerrilla activity. I traveled there several times. In my spare time I visited Leticia, in the Colombian Amazon. On several occasions I joined the military flights to places that weren't safely accessible except by plane. One was Buenaventura, the Pacific port, where I met with a fisherman's family that lived at the wharfs. They were dirt-poor. The whole population was suffering as the big Japanese and Russian trawlers were drastically reducing the fish stocks. A large crowd of children gathered around me. The local taxi driver who had driven me there was worried stiff I was risking my life by venturing near the docks. But the danger wasn't mine; it was their lives of silent desperation.

I went to Pasto, near the Ecuador border, on fact-finding trips. Galeras, the large volcano west of town, was supposedly dormant. There's a small scientific observatory near the crater at over 4000 meters. I hiked up to the rim on very loose soil and peered down into the cauldron, wondering why it was smoking so much. The Pastoños told me, "Oh it does that all the time." Six months later the Galeras volcano erupted and killed six vulcanologists. Navarro Wolff, ex-guerrilla and minister of health during my tour, later became mayor of Pasto and won national awards several years in a row for attacking corruption in the city.

Q: Was our policy towards Colombia completely dominated by the drug problem?

ROE: The drug issue was not the only focus, just the elephant in the room. The criminality fueled by the drug trade is like an occupying power. It undermines the rule of law and fragile democratic structures. It replaces local harvests with cash crops that cause addiction and death. It threatens the extinction of Indian tribes. Indigenous leaders that resist the drug gangs that cut down their forest are killed. In other areas the narcos corrupt members of the tribe by giving the young men motorcycles and guns. This totally undermines the authority of the elders. Rural villagers get caught in the crossfire between the guerrillas and the paramilitary thugs, two forces that finance themselves with drug money. Many drug processing places operate a form of slave labor. They recruit young people telling them they'll earn big money and will be free to go home on weekends. When they try to contact their families, their overseers kill them and dump their bodies in the river. Many who operate the homemade cocaine processing labs die in explosions caused by the chemical reactions.

Human rights issues constituted the other major U.S. government focus involving close, day to day scrutiny by our Congress and by international NGOs. AID and the Justice Department were cooperating in a long term effort to strengthen the antiquated judiciary and promote reforms. The 1991 constitution created a series of new judicial institutions: a Constitutional Court, an independent judiciary, specialized public order courts, and a government watchdog office, the "fiscal general." Gustavo de Greiff, the highly respected jurist who became the first fiscal general (attorney general), said the reforms must work because "impunity keeps us from living a civilized life." During 1992 I monitored the implementation of these reforms by the newly elected Congress and Constitutional Court.

Q: Well, something affecting both human rights and labor saw a film some time ago about the cut flower business. Cut flowers are beautiful, but they have a lot of chemicals. Young women go out and work in those areas with all those chemicals around. Is that a problem? Did you get involved in these worker health issues?

ROE: Not during that assignment. These issues emerged more recently, with Ecuador as a major focus for those concerned about conditions in the cut flower industry. Edmundo Esquinazi, the former Colombian ambassador to Israel, was one of those involved in the flower business. He had a strong social conscience. Hector knew Esquinazi well from the time they worked together in Israel. He visited the farm and reported that there were around 40 adult men and women working the flower plantations; they used protective gear and kept pesticide applications to a minimum.

Colombia has its share of child labor. Children work in street vending, family farming, rural mining operations. Quite a few are involved in coca picking and flower production. The ILO (International Labor Organization) estimates about six percent of Colombian children aged 10 to 14 are in the labor force. Colombia has worked with the ILO on projects to prevent child labor, especially in small-scale mining. It was the first government in the region to acknowledge the scope of this problem.

Q: And the violence in the labor sector -

ROE: Starting in the late 1980's, Colombia experienced a renewed wave of violence directed against trade unionists and other political targets. A decade later, hundreds of worker representatives were being assassinated or disappeared. The victims were campesino leaders, teachers, banana workers, factory advocates. Hundreds of peasants also lost their lives, just for being caught between warring sides. Trade unionists were often targeted by paramilitary forces that were linked to rogue army and police elements. Others were killed by drug and guerrilla mafias that don't tolerate anyone getting in their way. For example in 1991, FARC militia executed leaders of the palm workers union following mock trials accusing them of helping the peace process. In the mid-'90's, the AFL-CIO began sponsoring a small program through the George Meany Studies Center to get high-risk trade union leaders out of Colombia for a year at a time.

Q: It seems some Colombians in the United States have been prone to really nasty violence, not being discrete about it but taking out automatic weapons and going after each other in the streets of Miami.

ROE: The movies have dramatized the violence that surrounds the drug culture, depicting some of the worst nastiness on the planet. The Colombian outback reminded me of the wild West of our frontier days. Parts of the country had never bowed to any government authority. Until several years ago, around 70 percent of the countryside was under the control of the drug lords or the guerrilla bands. But there so are many other sides to Colombia. In recent years the government has made real strides to curb the violence and demilitarize the no man's lands. It has some of the oldest universities in the Americas. Its cultural life is strong, nourishing writers like Gabriel Garc  a M  rquez, painters like Botero, scores of other artists and intellectuals.

Q: How did you find social life there?

ROE: We had good friends in Bogota. The Embassy was a fairly convivial place to work. The violence was a low background noise that made you more alert to your surroundings but didn't isolate you. We had an interesting experience when Hector's sons Alvaro and Gabriel were visiting from Chile one summer. A Colombian friend, Daniel Quintero, was studying for his Masters while helping his father run a cattle ranch several hours south of Bogota near Villeta. The ranch was located in an area of sporadic guerilla activity. Daniel invited us to visit the farm and a cane-extracting plant between Bogota and Villeta. I checked with our security people, who considered the area safe at that time. It was quite a long trip. We stayed overnight near the cane sugar plant at a hoster  a with a garden chock full of monkeys and parrots and lush vegetation. Alvaro and Gabriel had a blast with the pool all to themselves, and our dogs Golda and Navarro splashing around with them.

The next morning we left early. At 8:30 we were snaking around a mountain road headed for the farm. Suddenly we came across five burned out buses. We learned that guerillas from the FARC had come down from the hills, taken all the passengers out, robbed them, sent them on their way and then set fire to the buses. The buses were still smoldering. They were purportedly guarded by Colombian policemen holding Uzis and makeshift weapons. Some were barefoot; others had what looked like homemade boots, ragtag uniforms or T-shirts and jeans. Hector said quietly, "They look like guerrillas." We never found out for sure. When we returned on the same mountain pass the next day, the armed "guards" were still there. They stopped us from taking a video. We photographed the still-smoldering buses on the way back. We'd been saved by the clock. An hour earlier that first morning and we'd have been in a heap of trouble.

Q: Well, you left Colombia in '90?

ROE: 1992.

Q: Where did you go after that?

ROE: I went to the Department. I had been out in the field for nine years. It was well past time for me to get acquainted with the bureaucracy. I was paneled to be the desk officer for the Rome-based UN food agencies, in the International Organization bureau. My overseas jobs each involved work that was focused on outreach and political network-building. I had avoided going to Washington out of concern that I would be stuck behind a desk. But I chose well and was lucky. My Department assignments all got me out of the office, traveling, negotiating and working with people in other government agencies and international organizations. This was a welcome surprise.

Q: Then you came to IO, International Organization.

ROE: I came back to headquarters for the first time in 1992 to head a small unit, International Organization/Agriculture. IO/AG is part of the development office of the International Organization Bureau (IO) which follows the UN Development Program and the Rome-based UN organizations - the Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO), the World Food Program (WFP) and the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD). My prime responsibility was serving as desk officer for the FAO. With an annual budget of nearly 750 million dollars, FAO is the largest specialized UN agency. When you work in rural areas in Latin America and many developing regions, if you say FAO, people generally know what you're talking about.

Q: How did you see the FAO working? This is new for you, looking at it from the Washington perspective. What were your impressions?

ROE: The FAO had been run for the last two decades by Secretary-General Eduardo Saouma of Lebanon, a minor despot. The organization was top heavy and bureaucratized. Among his other attributes, Saouma was the most anti-American chief of any UN organization. He saw himself as more powerful than most heads of states. At the same time the Clinton administration was looking for alternatives to the strident U.S. policy approaches that had aggravated tensions between rich and poor countries within the UN system. During the Reagan years, the U.S. government had withheld dues and attacked the UN as a useless organization. John Bolton led the ideological charge against the UN during his two-year tenure as the Bush II administration's UN Ambassador.

Out of 171 FAO members, 124 are developing countries, known as the G-77. When I started, the atmosphere was pretty toxic and the U.S. fairly isolated. Many concerns about the UN system are valid ones. Looking at the genocide taking place today in Sudan, it's clear that few of the countries of Africa and Asia or more prosperous countries like India that espouse democracy are willing to stand up against a fellow UN member and say, "You're committing genocide. Stop it." Nonetheless, the fire and brimstone approach had undercut our effectiveness in achieving objectives at the FAO. We wanted to engage our counterparts in the UN more cooperatively. State's role has been primarily to negotiate on budget issues and to ensure that U.S. agencies' speak as one. The Department of Agriculture has the lead on most substantive policy issues. USDA runs some joint programs with the FAO and they rely on FAO's field expertise and technical information for many projects. Under Bush I they had developed a closer relationship with the FAO. The outgoing IO/D Director was a very polemical officer, Juan Dudik-Gayoso. She was on permanent loan from AID and was married to a right wing Cuban-American diplomat, Tony Gayoso, who preceded her in the position. She was at odds with USDA and with most of our potential FAO allies on a host of policy issues. The new Under Secretary for Global Affairs, Senator Tim Wirth, was examining how the UN system was implementing Agenda 21 with a mind to stimulate progress on sustainable development issues.

Q: Agenda 21 being-

ROE: Agenda 21 was the outcome of the first UN World Conference on Sustainable Development (UNCSD) in 1990. At the close of UNCSD, the U.S. suddenly refused to sign the declaration on climate change. We reversed that decision a year into the Clinton administration and signed the agreement. UNCSD set out a 21-point agenda to reverse environmental degradation and to protect the planet for future generations through sustainable economic and social development. In short, take better care of the earth and the natural systems on which people depend. A major focus of Agenda 21 is sustainable agriculture and the FAO potentially can do a lot to advance this goal. The organization was about to elect a new Secretary General.

FAO council meetings are similar to the UN General Assembly. They take place every other year in the fall. FAO conferences are held each year in October in Rome. Preparations took nearly all year. We elaborated positions on dozens of issues. State developed scope papers and hashed out the budget issues. The debates were intense, very technical and closely linked to the highly charged issues of institutional reform.

The IO deputy assistant secretary was Melinda Kimble, an economist who looked with skepticism on many development programs. Her political orientation was conservative, but she was keen on starting a new chapter in our approach to the UN. She had served as Labor Officer in Tunisia and been Office Director for Egypt, moving up through NEA (Near East Affairs) before turning to global issues within State. Melinda and I worked in tandem to reach out to G-77 countries. She focused on the Arabic-speaking delegates, I focused on the Latin American caucus. USDA took the African and Southeast Asian countries where most of their cooperative programs were based.

At one point to everyone's surprise we defeated Saouma in a floor vote. It was a taxpayers' revolt. The SecGen proposed to codify the rules for a special reserve fund. Canada, Australia, Portugal, Great Britain and the U.S. opposed the idea. We regarded it as a slush fund and fiscally irresponsible. The unspoken issue was the Secretariat's total lack of consultation with the membership. China was neutral, but the Latin American countries were quietly becoming disaffected. The former Colombian ambassador had been one of Saouma's most outspoken supporters and said publicly he had hoped and prayed that President George H.W. Bush would not be reelected. The new Colombian ambassador, Ivan Marulanda, was a reformer and a lieutenant of Luis Gal  n before his assassination. I partnered with him on many issues. In the debate, Brazil and Colombia rose on the floor to insist that FAO make decisions on sensitive issues by consensus, not fiat. Together with other leading G-77 members, they mustered a vote that made Saouma withdraw his proposal on the floor. That sent shock waves through the Secretariat.

Soon after, Saouma's office called me saying he wanted to have a private audience. I was summoned to go alone into the lion's den. This was unprecedented. I consulted our delegation leaders. After mulling it over, they gave the go-ahead. Saouma was flanked by two of his aides. We sipped good Lebanese coffee. He said some flattering things about my efforts to get to know the FAO from the inside. Without much ado, he launched into a tirade about the damage done by agricultural subsidies to third world farmers. I listened and said on that issue we saw eye to eye, but that I was in Rome to do my best representing U.S. positions and I thought we were going to prevail. The interview closed shortly after that, still cordial but with a frosty look from the emperor.

We wanted the FAO to implement a sustainable agriculture agenda and refocus on the things it does best. To get there, we coordinated with NGOs and brainstormed with FAO experts. Cooperation with civil society was a major priority of Tim Wirth. So instead of locking up the U.S. positions in advance, we would collaborate with NGO organizations like the international pesticide action movement (PAM). I knocked on doors within the FAO bureaucracy. Melinda Kimble and I sought out American staff members and their allies to explore their top concerns and enlist their help in honing our positions. They were pleasantly surprised - many said they'd been left for years to fend for themselves. Most countries work hard to promote and protect their people within the UN system. The U.S. as a rule doesn't waste precious assets.

Q: Was this just inadvertence or was this a policy? I mean when we're talking about this, we're saying the U.S. is not using its influence to support its people or what?

ROE: In my experience, the U.S. uses little of its potential influence within the UN. We mouth off ideologically and want to sweep the agencies clean, but more often than not we ignore the people, the human capital, that make them run. It's part of a larger phenomenon that feeds anti-Americanism. We're the country that personifies the most in terms of people principles. We stand for freedom, human rights and open systems, for letting people's voices be heard within the governance process. But in arenas like the UN, we too often act like a rather forgetful and petty power. If we don't get our way in the first instance, we go and sulk. This contributes to bad feeling toward the U.S. and undermines the ideals we espouse.

In contrast, countries like Great Britain and Canada prepare their positions with a lot of care. They consult with and groom their staff within multilateral organizations. They take this work very seriously. They have meetings year round and try to get agency coherence within their systems. We had annual bilateral consultations with the Canadians on agricultural policy. Of course their foreign policy process isn't fragmented among multiple agencies like ours. But their attitude is what makes the difference. They're very professional about approaching the UN, and they employ their top staff for the task. Because the U.S. tends to devalue the UN, our delegations are often put together haphazardly. We wanted to change that approach. It was gratifying to see what could happen when cynicism was put aside.

Jacques Diouf, an outside candidate, won the FAO Secretary General election. The U.S. first backed the Australian candidate, but supported Diouf as our second choice. He was the first African to head the FAO. His administration was more collegial than Saouma's. Political issues like the Palestinian question or the banana dispute between Central America and Spain, things that really couldn't be resolved within that structure, lost much of their sheen. The technical work improved in a few areas.

We were able to channel an additional \$1,200,000 into a technical conference on plant biological diversity. We helped initiate a program to promote livestock diversity and focus public attention on the destruction and eradication of indigenous domestic specie cows, goats, sheep, draft horses, water buffaloes, pigs and other livestock - that are appropriate to the climate and conditions of distinct regions. The native species have disease and pest resistance, heat tolerance, higher feed-conversion ratios, and other agricultural benefits that need to be preserved. They are also beautiful in their unique qualities. But the world's stock of animal genetic resources is highly threatened. As of the early 90s, the FAO estimated at least 30 percent of the 4000 existing breeds of farm animals were endangered. The problem is intensifying. On the average one breed per week is lost due to habitat losses, population pressures, natural disasters, civil conflicts, and pressures from agro-business. The loss of plant diversity is also huge some estimates tell us that one type of crop is going extinct every day.

Q: I know we have archives of seeds, and so we're not losing the diversity of potatoes or something like that. I mean somewhere I hope there are vaults and that sort of thing.

ROE: Not long ago there were literally thousands of varieties of potatoes. Many have been lost. Now there's an effort to conserve those plant species in danger of extinction. The Norwegians are setting up a massive seed vault in the Arctic to serve as a backup to existing seed banks around the world. The freezing of seeds is important, but community-based conservation is key, because farmers are able to adjust crops to changing conditions. You don't want to lose farmers' know how or their adaptations of those crops that have unique strengths. The CGIAR network of agricultural research centers addresses some of these issues with support from the World Bank and USAID. They run CIP, the Centro Internacional de la Papa, in Peru. They preserve seeds and promote scientific investigation, exploring the impact of different strains of plant diversity. At the time, their programs were not well integrated with those of FAO. That shifted following Saouma's departure. In 1994 the CIP reached an agreement with the FAO to team up in germplasm collection.

Q: It's all well and good to try to preserve potato species but what about Guernsey cows? I mean how do you save them?

ROE: The Guernsey cows produce high quality, relatively high-fat milk, but when concerns emerged about cholesterol they went out of favor. Many breeds of livestock deserve a second look, because diversity is an evolutionary good in itself. You need alternatives to the model of factory agriculture that favors genetic uniformity and unhealthy, unsustainable methods of raising crops and livestock. There's no reason why farmers should be pushed to embrace the brand of the week when the species they have been using have adapted well for centuries. For example, some Andean countries were forcing peasants to kill off their llama herds. Government officials were promoting harebrained schemes to bring Holstein cows to the Andes - perhaps in the interests of seizing the land for other purposes. Now there's growing respect for indigenous species like llamas and alpacas. They make great wool, they're resilient, and they act effectively as watchdogs for sheep and other domestic animals. If weaknesses develop, scientists can cross-breed to strengthen the species. And likewise with Brahmin cattle and the water buffaloes - they are terrific choices for the Chapare in Bolivia and other semi-tropical region because they can haul, they're make good milk or meat, and they are tremendously hardy.

Q: Let's talk a bit about what was the FAO doing? I mean departing from a dictatorial system and an anti-American slant, how effective did we see it becoming?

ROE: FAO's goals in food security dovetail with U.S. objectives, but it had a lackluster record in carrying them out. We wanted the agency to become better focused, more transparent and responsive to the membership. We saw some signs of progress. The FAO Conference and Council became more civilized, less long-winded after the '93 election of Jacques Diouf. The G-77 leadership was becoming more open to North-South cooperation and to solving some of the UN's many financial problems. Much of the FAO bureaucracy was arthritic and costly. Some of the organization's country offices were not doing much besides working up cozy grants with the host governments. Other parts of the FAO held more promise. These included statistics, integrated pest management, plant genetic resources, the fisheries department, and to some extent food safety standards (the Codex Alimentarius).

A year into my assignment, I had an encounter with the Pope. The U.S. mission to the UN food agencies (FODAG) is housed in the same building as the U.S. mission to the Vatican. The Vatican is an important presence in Rome and within the FAO, whose motto is "fiat panis," (let there be bread.) Once a year the FAO has an audience with the Pope. He presides at a special service for all the FAO permanent representatives, their staff and families. By sheer luck I got a seat right on the aisle. When Pope John Paul II arrived, he began shaking hands with those on both sides of the aisle, asking their provenance. Because my husband is Catholic and Chilean, I had his folks very much in mind. When he asked me, I started to say Chile and quickly realized my mix-up. Pope John Paul II burst out laughing and said, "Estados Unidos!" I thanked him for raising people's hopes in Chile and helping them overcome a desperate standoff with Pinochet. He was happy to hear that. But as the service was ending he took a terrible fall. The photo of my handshake with his Holiness made a big hit with my Chilean in-laws. Hector's sister Natalia Bravo and her family treasure it.

Q: We're talking now about-

ROE: That was in 1993.

Q: Today is April the 5th, 2005. Three days after the death of the Pope. The funeral will take place in three days.

ROE: Yes, that's been on my mind. It's funny how geography impacts the way people see the death of someone who was the head of state, the head of the oldest international organization. The Pope had an immense personal power. On April 3 I played harp at Ireland's Four Courts, a restaurant in Clarendon, and I thought people would be talking about this loss, but no. In the Washington area, people are so bombarded with news they can get jaded. I watched the news clips showing people turning out to mourn the Pope in Krakow, Poland, where he had presided over a parish with no church, and fought ten years to get a place of worship; in Chile where he carried out brilliant advocacy for democratic change; in the Philippines where he spoke so sternly that Marcos stormed out of the meeting in his own palace. John Paul II was open to plenty of criticism. His views on birth control and abortion and the ordination of women became key criteria for choosing bishops. Many feel this veered the U.S. church hierarchy away from the social justice concerns of Vatican II. But he was a man of peace who spoke powerfully for freedom and tolerance. He was the first of the popes to go into a mosque, to visit Yad Vashem in Israel. He tried to reconcile ancient divisions within the religious community. His record gave him credibility for speaking out forcefully on Iraq and other issues of war and peace.

Q: I'd like to raise an earlier issue - you were working in IO from when to when?

ROE: 1992 to '94, during the end of Bush I and the first two years of the Clinton administration.

Q: Did you find yourself in an area that reflected the almost theological antagonism of right wing people in Congress and the Senate and the House of Representatives to the UN? You mentioned John Bolton. Did you see that impact or have to deal with it?

ROE: John Bolton was Assistant Secretary for International Organization from 1989 to January '93. He departed not long after my tour started. His influence was then waning, but his footprints were notable. This is a man who sported a mock grenade in his office, who as a top State Department official in a 1991 speech said if the UN secretariat building in NYC lost ten stories, it wouldn't make a bit of difference. I thought of that after 9/11. The debris we face today - the mistrust and undermining of U.S. influence - is partly due to that kind of legacy.

In his second administration, President Reagan changed his approach to disarmament issues making peace a major goal. By working so passionately on those issues he shocked the hawks and ideologues, including Bolton, who stridently attacked any international treaties that aim to restrict land mines, biological weapons, nuclear testing or the trade in small arms. You can't work these issues seriously while ignoring the UN system. There are those who saw Saouma, for example, as an odd relic of the cold war era. To Bolton and Senator Helms, he was Satan in person. That level of hatred occasionally surfaced in pronouncements by the Congress. An exception was the Senate's Select Committee on Hunger.

Q: The Select Committee has constituents at home and abroad.

ROE: Many. After changes in our policy approach, the relationship with Agriculture improved so much that they would ask State to head the delegations if USDA didn't have an assistant secretary to attend FAO meetings. But the flames whipped up by the UN haters were still out there. Take the World Heritage program run out of UNESCO. On occasion when UNESCO sent scientists to visit U.S. sites of global importance, some paranoid organizations would mobilize local sentiment around the idea that the UN is invading us or alighting to tell us how to run our parks. The things we expect other countries to do open their countries to information and technical cooperation are hard to reciprocate at home. Then we wonder why our image is tarnished around the world.

Q: Well, you mentioned you were in Rome a third of the time. Who was our ambassador to the FAO and how did he or she work the system?

ROE: The chief of mission for the U.S. food and agricultural mission in Rome was William Marsh. Because of the U.S. hostility to the UN system and especially to Saouma, we had downgraded the U.S. mission. The last Ambassador had been Millicent Fenwick. She served from 1983 to '87. She'd been a Congressional representative from New Jersey, a Republican, and was beloved by the FAO.

Q: She was also turned into a comic book character in the good sense by Garry Trudeau's comic strip Doonesbury.

ROE: No kidding! Bill Marsh was an internationalist and a historian who had worked mostly in the European region and in Vietnam. He was a raconteur and a creative diplomat who relished inventing ways to get around Saouma. He was committed to bridge the gulf between the U.S. and potential allies in the developing world. During the second Clinton administration, the Mission was upgraded when Senator George McGovern was appointed as Ambassador.

The U.S. Embassy in Rome has traditionally been a large mission with poor morale. Many Americans come to Rome expecting they're going to be living in style. Instead they live in cramped apartments, find little shops with no malls, and have to wade through streets jammed with all those pesky little motor scooters. So they fall into two groups, those who adore Rome as it is and those who are fish out of water. The FAO delegation, which included DAS Kimble and the USDA staff, made a point of learning about each neighborhood within walking distance of the FAO. We would stay in non-traditional places close to the Piazza della Minerva, near the Pantheon.

This seemingly impenetrable FAO bureaucracy was instead quite approachable. Like any bureaucracy it was a diverse collection of parts. A major problem was that many developing countries sent representatives to the FAO as a political plum rather than for their expertise. Women were often shut out, especially in Africa. But they were beginning to kick at the doors.

Q: Well, women in Africa are central to agriculture.

ROE: They surely are. I once heard former President Carter talk about his work in Africa. He'd go to villages and ask the town leader or tribal chief about the crops, whether they were rotating or improving them and how was production going. He'd get almost no answers from the top man, so he'd ask well, who does the work? The women, he was told. He'd ask to meet with the women. Then he got the answers. This year's Nobel prize went to Wangari Maathai of Kenya. She is a real force for change. In setting out to plant a million trees she had to fight a corrupt dictatorship which had her beaten and jailed several times. She persisted and organized women, and became a leading environment official and a model worldwide for women and young people.

Q: When you went to the FAO in Rome, did you have to open up channels with other members? Were Americans kind of shut out?

ROE: Americans weren't so much shut out as they were facing the results of self-isolation. U.S. delegates already had a close affiliation with those from the Commonwealth countries like Canada, Great Britain and Australia, as well as with West Europeans who shared our views about fiscal discipline. During my assignment, our delegation made a point of reaching out beyond this comfort zone. I developed ties with other perm reps from Latin America and from the newly liberated countries of Central, Eastern and Southeastern Europe. One of my closest colleagues, Elena Askerstam, was the Permanent Representative from Estonia. She had seniority within the regional group and had previously worked for the FAO.

After the floor debates, the real work began. We'd take turns covering the committee that produces the written record of the debates and the decisions taken. Things were so polarized in the FAO that for years those committees had been all night sessions in which every word was disputed. Neither side wanted to let go of the bone.

Some of our predecessors had reveled in the martyrdom of getting no sleep or time to break bread with other delegates. (In one FSI training session on multilateral diplomacy, former IO/AG Director Gayoso ridiculed the Europeans for wanting to visit cultural venues in Rome on weekends, instead of slugging it out in these dark rooms. I asked, "That's how you get to know them, isn't it?") Our EU counterparts and most other country reps like to do business over lunch or a cup of cappuccino. You can't be a sourpuss or fight cultural wars with any hope of success in Rome.

In the past the report committee assignment was a punishing assignment. We found instead that it could be an interesting way to build coalitions. If you understand the language issues and don't have to rely on the headsets and the official translations, you're a step ahead. With a bit of humor and common sense, you attract win new allies. We even got support from a few Arab-speaking countries that were normally on Saouma's side, because they saw us resolving small issues to advance the organization's mission. Eventually those sessions became shorter and more productive.

Q: I realize that there were a multitude of issues, but can you think of any issues that we did or didn't make headway on.

ROE: The U.S. and other reform-minded delegations pushed hard to have sensitive budget issues be decided by consensus and not by majority vote, and this is now the rule instead of the exception. During this period, the FAO held technical consultations for a Code of Conduct for Responsible Fishing, another U.S. aim. These talks eventually led to an agreement on fishing and coastal management practices aimed at halting the depletion of global fish stocks. Enforcing that agreement is still a huge challenge that depends on the member countries. A key U.S. objective was for the FAO to launch a center for domestic livestock diversity. We were only partially successful, but the FAO did develop a respected database on domestic animal diversity and helped raise global awareness of the impact of biodiversity loss in the livestock and plant sectors.

The FAO works to counteract the locust plague that cyclically hits sub-Saharan Africa. U.S. pest control experts with USAID collaborate with the FAO in these efforts. I helped uncork a fiscal bottleneck on the USAID side in 1992, when desert locusts reappeared on the coastal plains around the Red Sea. We also pushed to close country offices that could no longer be justified, freeing more resources for good programs like integrated pest management (IPM) for rice production in Asia. FAO experts trained hundreds of thousands of farmers for IPM in field schools. NGOs as well as the newly independent states and Eastern European countries were interested in these models.

Q: The Russians and Ukrainians have huge agricultural areas. Did they play much of a role or not?

ROE: During my assignment, the Russians were just starting to get their feet on the ground in Rome. Other Central European countries were taking the lead in that region.

Q: The Czechs, I imagine.

ROE: The Czechs, the Poles, the Hungarians and the Estonians had been watching FAO for years and showing more independence in their relations with the Secretariat.

Q: When you talk about agriculture, one can't help but feel there is this battle that continues to rage between our crop subsidies and the common agricultural policy of the EU, which is mainly German and French. Did that figure in your work?

ROE: It was a big sub-text. Some European representatives, especially the French, were lofty in speaking about their commitment to sustainable development. But their agriculture subsidies support intensive pesticide and fertilizer applications. The U.S. collaborated closely with the Cairns group, led by Australia, which promoted free trade in agriculture. At that point, we could do so with a straight face. Some years later, the Bush administration for the first time in decades let the agricultural industry lobby get its way in Congress and our position became less tenable. U.S. trade officials once tried to justify those atrociously large subsidies by saying we just put them out there as a negotiating chip to try to leverage an agreement with the Europeans on ending all subsidies. Well, it hasn't worked out that way. At least during my tenure, when we had a Presidential initiative to implement the sustainable development agenda, the U.S. administration was making strong efforts to incorporate environmental initiatives within the omnibus farm bill. Under Bush II, many of those initiatives shrunk, while farm subsidies to crops like rice, sugar beet and sugar cane have swollen.

Q: What about the delegations that go because they're in line for political rewards?

ROE: Surprisingly little of that on the U.S. side. Our delegations were pretty much all work horses. We would get either State's or Agriculture's assistant secretary to head the delegation. They would leave after a few days and the DAS would remain for most of the session, writing resolutions and speeches with us on the weekends. If we could get a couple of congressional representatives to come, we appreciated their presence as it gave us a chance to exchange ideas about the FAO. Several of the delegates were research directors within Agriculture; some were scientists coming from their research stations. AID would send a few experts, usually those working with the agriculture research centers. A good deal of intellectual ferment was generated within the sessions.

Q: Did you see a change in sort of the culture of AID where they were paying more attention to agriculture?

ROE: Not really. They paid lip service to agriculture during talks on the Presidential Directive on Sustainable Development (known as PRD-12), because agriculture was central to Agenda 21. At headquarters we worked year round in multi-agency task forces on PRD-12. Our unit prepared a major analysis on the FAO and the other food-related UN agencies. AID devoted less and less attention and resources to these issues. When I arrived in IO, Andrew Natsios headed AID's humanitarian assistance unit. After becoming AID Director, Natsios distilled the agency's objectives into four "pillars" that included democracy and economic growth but not agriculture. Agriculture had to find its way within each one of those columns, like a lost child.

Q: Was John Bolton still around?

ROE: Bolton was serving his last few months as Assistant Secretary for IO. After the 1992 Presidential elections, he was sidelined, along with others favoring doctrinaire combat within the UN. I was amazed to see his name reemerge as a candidate for Ambassador to the UN. How could we send someone who spoke glibly about blowing up the organization's headquarters in New York?

Q: A baffling question. Now, in '94 you moved where?

ROE: I moved from IO to OES (Oceans and International Environmental and Scientific Affairs) from 1994 to '96.

Q: So we'll take you out of the grass fields and put you in the ocean.

ROE: And the forests and clouds and rivers.

Q: Let's talk about the OES. I mean, what were its responsibilities and who was in charge when you went there in '94?

ROE: The assistant secretary when I first went there was Elinor Constable. She was succeeded by Eileen Claussen in 1995. OES is a multifaceted bureau. One big slice is scientific cooperation, which can involve monitoring issues such as water management in politically charged areas or, on a more regular basis, negotiating and managing bi-national agreements. The oceans division is involved with the Law of the Sea and fisheries, the agreements that encompass the Arctic and Antarctic and involve Alaska, Russia, the Inuit and other indigenous tribes and the protection of those vital oceans. Another section focuses on climate change and the Kyoto treaty. My area included environmental cooperation and conservation, the interface of trade and environment, biodiversity protection and endangered species.

Q: Let's look at your role.

ROE: My first office was ETC, Ecology and Terrestrial Conservation. I was liaison with Treasury, the World Bank and other international financial institutions. I was the point person for implementation of NEPA, the National Environmental Policy Act first enacted under President Nixon. NEPA became an early template for environmental protection policy and was adapted in various forms by other countries throughout the world. NEPA stipulates that before undertaking any development project affecting interstate commerce, most major transportation or construction projects, public works, dams, power plants the project sponsors must assess its environmental impact and engage in dialogue with a wide range of community stakeholders to ensure there are no serious adverse effects and that those identified are remedied. Internationally, this study is called an environmental impact assessment (EIA); in the U.S., it's termed an EIS or environmental impact study; if it connects multiple projects over time, it's a PEIS (programmatic environmental impact study). An EIS also addresses the related issues of economic and social impacts, historical preservation, and Native American artifacts and the like.

Q: What is the State Department doing with that?

ROE: Seems odd, doesn't it? In the early 1970s, Congress granted State the authority to issue permits for bridges, pipelines and river crossings on the border with Mexico and Canada. At that time 22 bridges crossed the 1200-mile international boundary formed by the Rio Grande River between El Paso and the Gulf of Mexico. State had previously permitted ten bridges under the guidelines outlined in Executive Order 11423, but had only conducted cursory reviews called environmental assessments (EAs). For some time the Audubon society, the EPA, the Fish and Wildlife Bureau and various NGOs had called on the Department to conduct a PEIS. An EA looks at one project at a time. It's a quick and narrow focus. Unlike an EIS or a PEIS, it doesn't involve having public hearings or give and take with local communities. Now, the State Department had never done a serious impact study, much less a PEIS that looks at cumulative impacts over time. The environmental side accord of NAFTA generated more interest

Q: NAFTA being the North American Free Trade Agreement...

ROE: Right. The NAFTA side accord increased public demand for action to address regional environmental concerns and better enforce existing environmental laws. After considerable discussion within the Department and sister agencies, OES/ETC and the Mexico desk thought it was time to go beyond a piecemeal approach to assess the whole range of bridges that had been, or would potentially be, permitted by State-

Q: We are talking about bridges across the Rio Grande into Mexico.

ROE: That's right. The structures also included a ferry crossing into Mexico, a dam and one railroad crossing. One focus of public concern is that the lower Rio Grande - where most of the bridges are located - is one of the richest, most biologically diverse ecosystems in the Western hemisphere. Bird-watchers, naturalists and those living in South Texas are aware of this treasure, but many others are not. This river habitat is home to the endangered jaguarundi and the ocelot.

Q: The jaguarundi being a type of swine?

ROE: That would be the javelina, a small wild boar that dines on prickly pear cactus. Some live in the Southwestern U.S. The jaguarundi is a mid-sized, plain-colored wild feline found in Central and South America, primarily in dense forest or shrub habitat. Some of these solitary cats roam in South Texas, New Mexico and Florida. The ocelot is a spotted feline, another cousin of the jaguar, that is also very elusive and endangered. Like the Texas tortoise, the Green Jay, Green Kingfisher, Aplomado Falcon and hundreds of migratory birds, the ocelot and jaguarundi need the native thornbrush that grows alongside the lower Rio Grande for safe cover and nourishment. In recent years bird-watching has spurred economic growth around Harlingen. Around fourteen million bird-watchers visit each year to observe the amazing birdlife. The Fish and Wildlife Service and Texas parks people have been working with private landowners and groups with the goal of connecting up the fragmented parts of this dense wildlife corridor. That habitat would be harmed by major construction projects, unless builders took steps to ensure continuous brush coverage and make passageways for wildlife.

To follow up, I co-drafted with the OES legal staff a proposal for a comprehensive environmental assessment on bridge crossings on the Rio Grande border with Mexico. We took the proposal through the inter-agency process with strong backing from OES. The Assistant Secretary was initially skeptical, but realized the need for State to demonstrate due diligence in enforcing the law. The proposal dovetailed with efforts by the Interior Department's biodiversity team to develop a digitalized map of the Texas-Mexico border adjoining the Rio Grande river basin.

Seven agencies, including EPA, the Department of Interior, Department of Transportation, Immigration and Naturalization Service and the U.S. Coast Guard, funded the programmatic environmental impact study (PEIS). To implement the study, we reached out to the Ft. Worth Army Corps of Engineers (ACE). This is a "green" arm of the ACthe local staff is made up largely of ecologists, biologists, and sociologists. Eric Verwers of ACE was project manager. He contracted Geo-Marine, an environmental consulting firm, to conduct the PEIS. In cooperation with Eric Verwers, Chris Ingram of Geo-Marine, and L/OES, we drafted the guidelines and filed a federal register notice. After placing the public notice, OES/ETC Office Director Robert Pringle suddenly said, "We can't go ahead now unless we have a letter of approval from the state of Texas." As things stood, Governor Bush's staff, including Secretary of State Tony Garza (now serving as Ambassador to Mexico), were well aware of State's responsibilities for permitting bridges. Steve Gibson, WHA's Coordinator for Mexican border affairs, had informed Garza's office about the proposed PEIS. But the Department could hardly request approval from the state of Texas when State's bridge permitting authority had been directly granted by Congress.

So we had a problem. Against all reason, Pringle started insisting that the state of Texas approve the study in writing. EPA, the Fish and Wildlife Service, the Coast Guard, General Services Administration, the Federal Highway Administration, the Mexico desk and other agency co-sponsors found that unacceptable. To meet some of Pringle's concerns, we wrote Governor Bush a letter outlining our plans. As we expected, there was no adverse reaction.

In late winter and spring of 1995, we held public hearings along Rio Grande towns and cities. Mexico desk officer Steve Gibson and I took turns chairing the public hearings and consultations with Texas agencies. Nature conservation groups, public interest groups and the head of the Texas Bridge Owners' Association welcomed the effort. Both sides made it clear they trusted State to be an honest broker. There was low-decimal grumbling in one meeting by a staff member of the Texas Conservation Commission concerning turf issues they had with Fish and Wildlife. The public feedback and news reports on our activities were uniformly positive. We demonstrated the Department's commitment to ecological cooperation on the border, a place where foreign policy directly affects people's lives.

Despite these results, there was a downside for me. Because of the intra-office dispute, Pringle and Peter Kaestner, the ETC deputy, wrote a very unfavorable rating and review (EER) of my performance in 1995. The EER was so unfounded that the Department later voided it through an expedited grievance process.

Q: Where do you feel Pringle was coming from? Was he afraid of adverse reaction in Texas?

ROE: Yes. He was extremely nervous about the prospect of agitating the political waters. George W. Bush was elected governor of Texas in 1994. Pringle referred to Gov. Bush as "the enemy" because of his conservative Republican leanings. He thought right-wing groups would whip up hysteria in Texas or that an article might appear in the Houston press saying the State Department was "invading" Texas. That crazy nuts ran the Lone Star state was the Washington patrician's view, with no basis in fact. I worked in South Texas during the 1960s and 70s. I knew something about the terrain. I didn't think Washingtonians had a patent on sanity, or that Texans were locos. The Mexico desk was even better acquainted with Texas politics. Steve Gibson knew we were on solid ground. Tyrus Fain, the Assistant Land Commissioner for Texas and a former colleague from the Yarborough campaign, supported this project, as did local and state environmental NGOs and wildlife officials. Not one local, not even Congressman Tom Delay's brother (who attended one of our hearings), was spooked about "black helicopters" arriving from Washington.

Another problem was managerial. Pringle had given the go-ahead on the PEIS without thinking it through. Before filing the Federal Register notice, I sent Pringle and A/S Constable a message asking them "are you sure we should go ahead?" They answered yes, full speed. For standing my ground on a program he had approved, Pringle viewed me as insubordinate. ETC Deputy Director Kaestner, who did Pringle's bidding, was wrapped up in his own personal ambitions and hobbies. His EER and Pringle's review statement got the facts wrong. It basically said I was an uppity broad, in terms not much more subtle than that. Larry Cohen, who had the NAFTA portfolio in the neighboring OES office, witnessed some of Pringle's unprofessional conduct, including his shouting fits; he wrote a strong statement backing my position. Steve Gibson, Joe Montgomery of EPA and key officers at other agencies testified in writing that I'd represented State's interests effectively while negotiated with numerous federal and state actors.

Rafe Pomerance, the Deputy Assistant Secretary, took immediate action on my behalf after Pringle and Kaestner wrote the flawed review. In June 1995, Rafe moved my whole portfolio to the adjoining office, ENV (the Office of Environmental Policy). In less than six months, the grievance board threw out the blackballing EER.

In ENV I continued work on the PEIS and on environmental issues related to the World Bank and Inter-American Development Bank. I was also involved in preliminary negotiations with Canada and Mexico concerning NAFTA implementation. Article 10.7 of the North American Free Trade Agreement's side accord requires the signatories to develop environmental assessment guidelines for proposed government projects that are "likely to cause significant adverse transboundary impacts." Trilateral talks began in Canada in August '95 under the auspices of the Council on Environmental Cooperation (CEC), a small organization created by the NAFTA side accords that is headquartered in Montreal and funded equally by the U.S., Canada and Mexico. The CEC was at that time headed by Greg Block, a U.S. environmental attorney. With the White House's Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) initially in the lead, we formed a 22-agency international working group to hammer out U.S. policy. Sandra Levinson of L/OES headed the TEIA (transboundary environmental impact assessment) negotiating team. State, CEQ, EPA, Justice and Interior made up the task force. Our delegation included advisory representatives from the Western Governors' Association and from the Tohono O'odham, a large Southwestern tribe that spans the border with Mexico.

Q: How did these people work together? Were they all pretty much in the same chorus or did you have problems?

ROE: There was a lot of push and pull, but the U.S. delegation worked well as a team. The U.S. and Canada made it clear from the start that any agreement would apply only to projects under federal jurisdiction and that the TEIA could not cover projects under the exclusive authority of state and local governments. In the beginning Mexico seemed prepared to accept these limitations. Canada has plenty of thorny issues with the U.S. over acid rain, water pollution, fisheries and the like, but in this arena their position was much closer to ours than to Mexico's. As the negotiations progressed, divisions within the federal government of Mexico surfaced and they rejected the compromise text that "respected the integrity of subnational processes." By 1997, the negotiations came to an impasse.

Q: Once you got over that clash with your supervisor, did things move more smoothly?

ROE: Well, yes - Pringle was no longer over me. I transferred to ENV (Office of Environmental Policy), which adjoined ETC. The ENV director was Day Mount. The deputy was Bob Ford, an experienced and respected civil service officer. Day, Bob, Larry Cohen and the other ENV officers had good insights on the issues I covered. These included working with Treasury on debt-for-nature agreements with other South American countries. I worked closely with the Economic Bureau's Office of Development Finance (EB/ODF). Together with Steve Liston of ODF, we monitored what the World Bank and regional development banks were doing to incorporate environmental guidelines into its lending activities. I met regularly with a large consortium of NGOs called the Tuesday Group. The National Resources Defense Council and other NGOs frequently had good leads about how Bank project were developing on the ground. As an example, we worked with Bank staff to recast key elements of a \$39 million agricultural loan for Venezuela and form a working group to promote sustainable food security and natural resource protection in the agricultural sector, the Bank's largest portfolio.

Another focus was the Pangué dam, a project of the International Finance Corporation (IFC), the investment arm of the World Bank. Pangué was approved in 1993 despite U.S. resistance. This 450-megawatt hydroelectric project was the first step in a series of dams planned by the Spanish corporation Endesa on the upper Bio-Bio River in south-central Chile. In January 1995 my sister Becky from Colorado joined me in a quickly-organized trip up the Bio-Bio to see the Pangué and find out about how it was affecting the ecosystem, downstream users and especially the Pehuenche, an indigenous community whose only homeland was this gorgeous mountainous watershed. We traveled by truck up the mountain with the Grupo de Accion por el Bio-Bio and met with Berta and Nicolas Quintreman and other Pehuenche community leaders in the upper Bio-Bio. They were up in arms about the plans for their forced removal and continued fighting for years to come. We saw clear evidence that the series of dams would threaten the temperate rainforest habitat, which according to recent Bank studies was one of the most biodiverse and fragile in South America.

On my return I raised major questions about the project's impact in a memo to the World Bank, and we had heated exchanges with the IFC. We were joined by other Bank officers and environmental organizations, responding to a long-standing complaint raised by Chilean NGOs. This push led WB President Wolfensohn to commission an independent review of the Pangué loan to see whether the project complied with WB policies and whether any of IFC's legal guidelines had been violated. That report, completed in 1997, confirmed our concerns that the project had been initiated without credible studies or public input and would do real ecological and socio-economic damage. The next dam in the series, called Ralco, is now being built without World Bank financing. Experiences like this have made WB officials stay clear of large dam proposals.

Treasury manages a large interagency committee that reviews every loan under the Pelosi amendment. Under that law USG reviews potential loans for their impact on environmental quality, human rights and worker rights. Faced with a huge volume of project proposals, you quickly figure out which players in EPA, AID or outside the government can give you good leads, especially on projects that could be improved before they come to a yes or no vote of the board. This affects the flow of resources to issues we are promoting internationally. U.S. development assistance is just one part of a broader mosaic; the largest portion is provided by international financial institutions. The World Bank, the IFC, and the Inter-American Development Bank set the tone for donor countries' development programs.

Q: You did this from 1994 until '96. Is that right?

ROE: Yes. OES had decided to create environmental "hubs," officers who are based in an Embassy but work on a regional basis to catalyze more assistance and promote U.S. positions with respect to climate change negotiations and other global issues. OES had asked if I wanted one of the regional hub positions. As I understood the job, the "hub" would be like a glorified cheerleader for U.S. policies and programs for Central and Eastern Europe (C/EE). I couldn't see the point at a time when the U.S. was seriously cutting back on funding for the C/EE region. I bid instead on a position in Budapest, Hungary. I was always felt a kinship with Hungarians, their struggle and that of their neighbors for freedom. The environmental movement was the cutting edge of the democratic revolution in Hungary. I was selected to be environmental/science attaché in Budapest - one of the few times I won my top choice for an onward assignment - and began nine months of training in September 1996.

Q: So you took what, Hungarian?

ROE: Hungarian, or Magyar.

Q: Wow.

ROE: Also C/EE (Central and Eastern European) area studies, which I thoroughly enjoyed. The area studies director, Steven Stoltenberg, is an expert on the region, its turbulent history and rich intellectual life. (Stoltenberg is now working with State's intelligence and research bureau, INR.) He's a keen cinema buff. He showed us *Moving Trains* and several other legendary movies from the Czech new wave of the 60s and 70s. At his request, I organized a session on the intersection of political and environmental issues. In the spring of 1996 I took part in a two-week language immersion tour to Budapest, Debrecen and Eger that was organized by FSI's Hungarian staff. Taken together, these courses were more thorough preparation than I'd had for any Foreign Service assignment.

Leaving Washington was hard for me because in the spring of 1997, Hector told me he couldn't accompany me as planned in Budapest. When we moved to Washington, he started his own business handling air container traffic as a contractor with Airborne Express. He didn't want to lose his vesting in Social Security and what he'd built up over our time in the U.S. I understood, but felt especially sad about leaving our two dogs. The decision to stay was Hector's, but the dogs had no say at all. Two weeks before I departed for Budapest, my mother and stepfather, then close to their 87th birthdays, drove down from upstate New York for an impromptu stay. We paid a visit to Grandfather Lester Roger's grave at Arlington National Cemetery and had an idyllic weekend. In the next few years, I saw Eloise many times during my home stays. But the August visit was one of the last times we were together before her health began a downhill path. It was a great send-off.

Q: You were in Budapest from 1996 to '97?

ROE: I was in language and area studies in 1996-97, and served in Budapest from August 1997 to August 1999.

Q: Let's talk about your work and what it was like in Budapest.

ROE: I went to Budapest as Environmental and Science Attaché<sup>1/2</sup>. One of my responsibilities was to be Commissioner for the U.S.-Hungary Science and Technology Joint Fund, a small but impressive organization founded by the governments of Hungary and the U.S. In 1989 President H.W. Bush made an historic speech in Budapest and signed an inter-agency agreement to spur scientific exchanges and cooperative research in Central and Eastern Europe. Over the next decade, the S&T Joint Fund supported hundreds of scientific projects, all subject to peer review, engaging thousands of scientists from the U.S. and Hungary. The Fund developed close ties with OES, the National Science Foundation. Within the country it cooperated with the Foreign Ministry, the Hungarian Academy of Sciences and the Ministries of Environment, Agriculture and Health.

In the same speech the President committed the U.S. to work with the European Union to help clean up Soviet-era contamination in these countries. That was the genesis of the Regional Environmental Center (REC), an independent organization that builds cooperation among governments, businesses and NGOs to address the most pressing environmental problems in the region. I was U.S. liaison for the REC, which is headquartered in Szentendre, a medieval town a half an hour from Budapest. By the mid-1990s, core U.S. funding was ending, but EPA still kept a visible presence in the REC's governance and supported specific projects. The REC was branching out to the Balkans, Eastern Europe and the Baltic states

Q: I would think the whole environmental and science scene was dominated by Hungary's desire to get into the European Union because the EU has taken such a strong stand on various environmental issues.

ROE: The dialogue was framed by EU accession. That involved a complex series of steps to adapt Hungary's laws and institutions to Brussels' policies for environmental protection. This had a price: the EU accession process focused largely on the legal and bureaucratic adjudication process. On the books, Hungary's environmental laws were quite advanced. But implementation was spotty, and the accession process tended to draw scarce energies and resources further away from the enforcement of existing laws. The REC aimed to open up avenues for broad-based public participation. These were modeled not on EU bureaucratic procedures but on the experience of the U.S. and emerging countries. The REC became a catalyst for bringing citizens into the environmental boardroom.

Q: Did Hungary have a Green Party or a reflection of the German Green Party?

ROE: They had a small Green Party, but the ecologists were spread throughout the political system. The only place where they had zero presence was in the former Communist Party, which renamed itself the Socialist Party.

Q: I may be wrong, but the Green Party in Germany started out with the title Green party, and has moved way beyond the environment. It tends toward the more activist left.

ROE: That's Germany. But in Hungary, the environmentalists have deeper, broader roots. Theirs was the most vocal movement challenging the Soviet-supported regime in the 1970s and 80s. After the Soviets crushed the Hungarian revolution of 1956, the incipient environmental movement was one place that people could more easily get away with expressing their disagreement with the authorities. The movement coalesced when the Duna Kör (Danube Circle) formed in 1984 under the leadership of János Vargha to fight the Gabčíkovo dam project. Ironically, when I arrived in Budapest in 1977, the Embassy and the intelligence community were convinced the Greens were marginal, insignificant, and that Horn's dam project was inevitable. I had a different take, and advised Washington this issue would be a dynamite keg for the Horn regime.

Q: There have been some major disputes with Hungary and Slovakia over these dams, weren't there?

ROE: Yes, in 1992 Czechoslovakia completed construction of Gabčíkovo, a hydroelectric project in the upper part of the middle Danube. The project was designed by Soviet-trained engineers under a 1977 agreement with Hungary. (In his dissident days, Czech Prime Minister Vaclav Havel decried Gabčíkovo as an example of "Stalinist megalomania.") In the 1980s, during the waning years of the Soviet empire, Hungary began construction of Nagymaros, the twin project, in a sensitive area of the Danube bend just 30 miles from Budapest. A massive popular movement arose in opposition to the dam, which to Hungarians symbolized arrogance of one-party rule. The anti-government protests forced the government to suspend construction and hastened the collapse of the iron curtain.

The case went to the International Court of Justice (ICJ). In 1997 the ICJ ruled that Hungary was wrong to have terminated its part of project under the 1997 treaty, but also that Slovakia had no right to build Gabčíkovo unilaterally. In other words, a draw.

Hungarian Prime Minister Gyula Horn, who was elected in 1994, had promoted the dam as a Communist official when Hungary was under Soviet rule. Now he used the ambiguous ICJ ruling to revive the hydroelectric project. Once again the Danube affair raised passions to a boiling point. The protest built up steam, and by early 1998 massive demonstrations against the Nagymaros dam involved broad constituencies - the Hungarian Democratic Forum, apolitical associations like the Esperanto Club, and conservative groups like the Association of Hungarian Families. The movement was fired by the eco-warriors of the Duna Ki<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub>r. But it was populated by ordinary Magyars: housewives, artists, students, architects and technicians.

Q: What was the dam supposed to do?

ROE: Gabčíkovo, the upstream dam, was built to collect and release water through a long channel to generate 720 megawatts of electricity. Nagymaros, the downstream project, would control water fluctuation and generate additional electricity.

Q: And the major objections were

ROE: The negative impacts and environmental risks included destroying the habitat of dozens of birds and aquatic species, polluting the drinking water, and lowering hydrostatic pressure for the treasured thermal springs around Budapest. The area most threatened was Szigetköz, the marshes, hardwood groves and wet meadows along the floodplain of the Danube. This wetlands area harbors many endangered species and works as a hydrological discharge for the whole northeastern region of Hungary. People were also responding to deep-going cultural and national identity issues. The Danube gave birth to a broad turn-of-the-century artistic and philosophical movement that was expressed in one of Europe's richest, most unique art nouveau architecture and design. The movement sought to reclaim Hungary's indigenous origins, re-ignite its cultural and linguistic ties with the East, and humanize industrial development. The motivation for the dam directly conflicted with this consciousness. The project would submerge a number of small islands including Helemba, which contains invaluable Celtic and Arpad ruins. Indirectly, it was a terrible reminder of the 1920 Treaty of Trianon that severed Hungary from two-thirds of its national territory and the majority of its population. The Magyars have been scorched too many times in their troubled history; they are understandably protective of the land and rivers they have left.

Q: Particularly during the period of the '20s and '30s, dams were the big thing in the Communist world.

ROE: Not just in that world think of the Grand Coulee Dam. In Hungary's case, it unseated the government. Prime Minister Horn tried to bulldoze the decision through. The opposition was overwhelming. Horn's party was defeated in the April 1998 parliamentary elections by Victor Orban, a conservative. Orban named János Vargha, one of my close contacts, as his environmental advisor. During the 1970s Vargha received the Goldman Environmental Prize for his work with the Duna Kör. Working inside the system proved a hard fit for him, although the victory was sweet at the time.

Q: I lived in Belgrade for five years. We used to love to look at the Danube. In fact it's a confluence of the Sava and the Danube there. Now, what were your impression of Hungary at the time? It wasn't that long after it had cast off being part of the Iron Curtain and had come back into the Western world. How that was working? Who was the Ambassador and what else were you up to?

ROE: When I arrived the outgoing Ambassador was Donald Blinken, an investment banker. Peter Tufo, the new Ambassador, arrived in January 1998. He was a political appointee. Tom Robertson was the very able DCM. The previous DCM, Lynn Lambert, had come to Budapest in September 1997. She was a micro-manager and very contentious. When Tufo arrived, she departed after only six months at post. My position was a semi-autonomous part of the economic section, an upbeat office headed first by John Moran and then by Jean Bonilla. I worked across the hall in an EST section that contained a classified and unclassified computer; the latter was essential for the great bulk of communications with our counterparts in Hungary. (The only other unclassified pc available for internet traffic was located two stories below.) Andrew Bock, a full-time Dante Fascell fellow, was environmental officer. He was well-versed in the science community, spoke fluent Hungarian, and helped enormously during my first year. I was catapulted into negotiations on the climate change treaty. I worked with the REC and served as Commissioner of the U.S.-Hungary Science and Technology Fund. We were assisting the University of Rochester in a series of conferences on environmental technologies, promoting U.S.-based environmental firms, and following a range of other issues from biodiversity protection to public health to nuclear safety.

On all fronts, Hungary was reforming its institutions and developing new ways to meet EU standards. The REC for example was implementing the Sofia Biodiversity Initiative in an effort to ensure that economic transition would enhance, not harm, biological and cultural diversity. Ambassador Tufo was looking for ways to mobilize U.S. financial resources to assist in Hungary's campaign to develop its poorer regions to the East.

The Balkans war raised tensions throughout the region. Taszár, the U.S. Army base in southern Hungary, played a strategic role in the conflict leading up to the 1999 Kosovo air-strikes. Hungary provided strong support for the U.S. effort in Kosovo, but was concerned about risks to millions of ethnic Hungarians living in bordering countries.

Q: Was Tufo of Hungarian descent?

ROE: No. He billed himself as a "friend of Al Gore" - a former staff aide to Senator Gaylord Nelson and later an investment attorney in New York City. Tufo was keenly interested in the environment. But when it became clear there was little USG money to spend in this area, his ardor cooled. He was on permanent overdrive, and his personal affairs would often intertwine with government business. For example, an environmental attorney friend of Tufo's who wanted a job in Central Europe inundated our section and the front office with hundreds of faxes pressing his case. Finally, I spoke with the administrative counselor who agreed there was potentially a big conflict of interest. When I conveyed this to the attorney, he understood at once. Other officers had urged me to walk on eggshells out of fear of incurring Tufo's wrath.

Q: Was that just a problem for the Embassy or did it have an affect on our relations with Hungary?

ROE: Hungarians are sharp observers with a good sense of humor. The Ambassador was divorcing wife number two when he arrived in Hungary. He married an actress, then that ended. He later married the daughter of a Nepali businessman. At some point after my departure, he reportedly looped in his third or fourth wedding reception with an official USG celebration in historic St. Matthias Cathedral on Castle Hill in Buda. Society-watchers may have enjoyed these operettas, but they were tough on Embassy staff. Ambassador Tufo often cancelled meetings on a moment's notice. He was mercurial and a dedicated self-promoter.

On the plus side, Tufo was an astute public communicator. He understood U.S. politics and social history. He gave several presentations to Roma groups about our civil rights experience, talking from the heart about how Afro-Americans fought successfully to overcome centuries of degrading, inhuman treatment. He paid close attention to economic and law enforcement issues. A key focus was the International Law Enforcement Academy, which the FBI founded in Budapest in 1995.

Q: Well, it doesn't hurt to give it flavor. These are things we have to deal with at post. The Ambassador is a public figure

ROE: And in this case very colorful.

Q: What about the Roma? You've got a two-part problem. One is the centuries-old xenophobia about those we call gypsies. I was in Yugoslavia for five years and saw the same thing. At the same time behind this prejudice were other concerns, like the question of settlement and the splintered leadership in the Roma community. How were Hungarians addressing these issues?

ROE: Historically, any government efforts to forcibly settle the Roma instead of letting them develop their own culture have been disastrous. Treatment of the Roma and of minority Hungarians in neighboring countries related directly to EU accession. Hungary had close to 500,000 Roma out of a population of 10.2 million. The Roma make up the largest minority. Most were living in substandard conditions, with at least seventy-five percent below the poverty line. Hungary and neighboring countries had traditionally sent Roma children to "special" schools, which were run as though they were schools for the retarded. This was a virulent kind of educational apartheid. Less than ten percent of Roma youth graduated from high school. Those that finished college you could count on your hands. The Communists had promoted a disastrous policy of assimilation. (In some ways this mirrored the U.S. practices from the 1950s to the mid '70s, when our government tried to close down Indian reservations.) Uprooting the Roma to urban areas was aimed to encourage integration. But suppressing their ethnic identity only led to alienation, despair, alcoholism and greater unemployment.

Starting in the early 1990s, Hungary changed its tack and experimented with a modest self-government system focused on education and culture, with mixed results. The Roma had a desk in the Education Ministry. Reformers tried to implement housing solutions and to develop legislation for expanded civil rights and cultural diversity. Still, local government officials have been resistant to change. Divisions in the Roma community and high post-transition unemployment and crime rates made the situation worse. Police brutality remained an uppermost concern of the Roma. In one case a local Roma leader took part in a radio program discussing police problems. In retaliation, the town police assaulted him and his brothers and beat them severely.

Q: I recall the gypsies coming on the streets of Belgrade. You quickly put your hand on your pocket - I mean just a fact of life.

ROE: When I worked in Rome, I heard similar admonition don't walk alone near the monuments or "they" will surround you. In Budapest, a metro official once warned me that the Roma were *vígyszeyes* (dangerous) because they would spread germs and take your money. This is the fear reaction. People who are insecure apply it to any group that differs from them. During my language immersion, I went to a Roma dance hall frequented by teens and young adults. We FSI students were the only non-Roma at the event. The Roma were polite and very shy.

One weekend in October 1998 I drove to Romania with Mary McKinley, then a lecturer at Catholic University and Corvinus in Budapest; Claudia Spahl, a political officer at the German Embassy; and two anthropology post-grad students, one of whom was Roma. We toured the huge Roma fair called Vasarfekeț (Black River Market) in Nișgreni, Romania. It's like a giant county fair, teaming with caravans of traders, horse carts, musicians, livestock, stray dogs, colorful scraps of everything a home might need. We stayed over in Cluj, the formerly Hungarian city in Transylvania. That was a fascinating glimpse of the west of Hungary that was chopped into pieces following World War I. As for Nișgreni, despite its rough exterior, the flea market turned out to be about as safe as a street fair in Georgetown. There's a sense of protection you don't find in a rootless, anonymous urban setting. The gypsies were the smiths of Europe in centuries gone by and they held a more respected economic position then, even though religious authorities had persecuted them for centuries.

Q: You'd hear about them in Ireland and England going back and carrying pots around.

ROE: Also throughout Central Europe.

Q: In fact they were called tinkers there.

ROE: They were the metal and iron workers, craftsmen, scissors-makers and repairers of all kinds of household goods, and there was good income in that. Modern manufacturing obliterated these professions. Hungary went through difficult economic times in the first years of the transition to democracy with the closing of the state-run industries. It was hardest for women workers and other marginalized groups like the Roma. Now, Roma artists are making films that help you understand their situation and aspirations. A must-read on traveling gypsy traditions is a recent book, *Zoli*, by Colum McCann. Zoli is a poet and singer whose character is based on the life of Papusza, who fled fascism to join a clan of Roma harpists. Isabel Fonseca, a London-based journalist, lived with Roma families in Romania and other C/EE countries and wrote a gripping portrait of the Roma and their journey called *Bury Me Standing*. The public spaces around Roma homes seem to be disheveled, even trashy at times. Inside, the homes are immaculate. Traditionally the Roma take a lot of pride in their way of life. They have big clans. If they trust you, you're in good company.

They face horrendous discrimination. The Nazis systematically exterminated gypsies, beginning with the pretext of crime prevention in Russia, Poland and the Balkans. Now the same attitude is revived in the skinhead crimes that have taken place in Russia, Eastern Europe, Germany and neighboring countries. To this day no memorial exists to the tens of thousands of Roma Holocaust victims.

Q: That's a long- neglected story. Now, during this assignment, was the environment your primary area of concentration?

ROE: Science and technology cooperation, climate change and environmental trade - those were the basic issues. I observed the Paks nuclear facility in Central Hungary. Paks is a meticulously managed plant, in a league of its own among the former Soviet bloc nuclear reactors. It has developed a regional training center to help scientists, technicians and engineers operate and maintain safe, environmentally sound nuclear plants. Given the uphill challenges of achieving nuclear safety in Russia and Eastern Europe, this is a vital service.

I worked closely with the U.S.-Hungary Joint S&T Fund in an effort to identify alternative sources of financing. From the beginning, the Fund's staff was first-rate. Dr. Dóra Groő and her assistant, Károly Zimbori, had years of experience making things happen with scant resources. Their scientific colleagues were great assets to me in the field. Over the past seven years the Fund had financed cooperative research projects with a cumulative total of \$10 million, contributed equally by the USG and the Hungarian government. It was a model for other joint funds in the region, and most observers considered it to be the best managed. The S&T Fund directly engaged Hungarian scientists, rather than the science institutes, which under Soviet influence were bureaucratized and geared more toward pure research than to practical applications. During the budget crisis of the mid 1990s, Secretary of State Warren Christopher had decided to cut off funding. USAID kept up the matching contributions for one year. The Fund ran for several more years on interest. But the Department's short-sighted decision lost a precious resource that created multiple returns.

When Norbert Kroő, a renowned physicist and vice president of the Hungarian Academy of Science, became Deputy Education Minister, I approached him about the need to sign a GLOBE agreement. GLOBE is a worldwide project that Vice President Gore had initiated to engage high school students in doing scientific and environmental data collection and sharing their results with an internationally accessible database. The U.S. had tried to get Hungary to participate for over five years. The Education Ministry had stonewalled this in the past, partly from territorial resistance to coordinating with the Foreign Ministry's science experts. With a push by Káro and Bea Camp of USIS, we got the agreement signed. Vice President Gore sent me a letter of appreciation. Our real thanks go to Hungary's science community.

One of the S&T multi-year projects supported by Cornell University was led by Dr. István Kajati and his "Healthy Apple Team" - scientists and plant protection experts with Hungary's Soil Conservation Service who were promoting biological alternatives to pesticides. I accompanied the team in several pilot projects as they developed systems to certify integrated pest management methods, to preserve more of the old apple varieties and market them. Hungary has a wealth of apple species, with amazing taste and forms. Preserving this diversity would be harder when they entered the EU.

Q: So the EU tends to try to standardize everything.

ROE: Well, in Europe as well as the U.S. the commercial and bureaucratic pressure is to shift to factory farming and monocultures. The push is to make everything bigger and use large-scale equipment and chemical inputs, putting small producers and nature-based systems at a disadvantage. One of Hungary's most precious resources was its amazingly rich black soil. It had been minimally damaged by pesticides.

Q: Were Hungarians hit as hard as some other places by the Communists as far as collectivizing and all that?

ROE: The Rikosi government implemented a reign of terror after World War II that included gangland killings, political executions and completely fraudulent elections in 1947. From then to the mid-'50s, they tried various forms of collectivization that contributed to deep economic depression. During the Khrushchev era they had to scale back these experiments. Here and there in the countryside you see remnants of the collective farms, whose machinery and buildings are rusting, abandoned. The worst damage to soil and water happened when Soviet military bases dumped their spent fuels in retribution for being ejected from Hungary.

The Regional Environmental Center was a window into exciting trans-boundary initiatives with respect to biodiversity, pollution prevention, environmental management and citizen participation in Central, Eastern and Southeastern Europe. It served as a clearinghouse for best practices and credible environmental information. The REC had promoted early efforts to create bi-national parks for cross-border natural resource protection. Under the Soviets, the Hungary-Austria and Hungary-Yugoslavia border was off limits. Protecting the ecosystems that stretch along these borders was a good way to engage citizens and help overcome old ethnic feuds. The REC's Executive Director, Jernej Stritih, a Slovenian, was exploring programs for post-war work in Kosovo and Croatia and opening new offices in the newly independent states. I learned a lot from Jernej about Slovenia's role in fighting the Serbs and protecting their unique landscape.

Q: What was your interface with the Environmental Ministry?

I worked closely with Esther Szűcs, the International Relations Director for the Ministry of Environment, in several EPA-financed projects including wetlands restoration and strategic planning. I represented the Embassy in ongoing talks, both formal and informal, with the Environmental Minister and staff concerning the 1997-98 Conference on Climate Change for the Kyoto Protocol. Hungary's top climate change expert, Tibor Farago, was a member of the Kyoto technical committee. We became close collaborators. Hungary's positions had an impact on other C/EE countries, which were beginning to carve out a more independent position in the talks. Hungary was open to the idea of emissions trading, which the EU generally discouraged at the time. Ambassador Mark Hambley, the lead U.S. negotiator on sustainable development issues, visited Budapest during a technical meeting on climate change that Hungary hosted. Mark's rapport with the C/EE delegates helped advance understanding of our positions while answering the Hungarians' concerns.

In 1998 USAID launched the Ecolinks campaign, an effort to promote opportunities for U.S. environmental companies in southeastern Europe and the NIS countries with Hungary as a partner. The first recipient was a project called the Living Machine. This is a biological wastewater treatment system that uses completely organic methods. It was developed in Vermont by Living Technologies. Attila Bodnár, a Hungarian architect who had been living in Vermont, had retrained as an engineer to bring this program to his native country. I introduced Attila to Robert McIntosh, the regional director of the Houston-based Trammel Crowe (TC), the biggest U.S. company in real estate and office parks in the C/EE area. Robert and his wife Susan were keen on environmental protection, and his firm was looking for alternatives for industrial wastewater treatment for their office parks and warehouse complexes in Budapest. It irked McIntosh that TC was paying the municipalities to treat their wastewater; but local authorities were still dumping the industrial waste directly into the Danube. He had talked to scores of consultants sent by USAID, but none had proposed a realistic, first-hand solution. I brought Attila Bodnár together with Robert McIntosh in my home and later introduced him to the Ecolinks director.

The initial grant enabled Bodnár to bring over experts and trim the budget to a competitive level. The Living Machine project obtained a conceptual permit from the municipal government of Budapest to treat industrial waste; shortly afterward they were contracted to build an organic treatment center in an environmentally sensitive area near Lake Balaton. The project later branched out to Eastern and Southeastern Europe. Investing in sanitation is not something that USAID sees as a public health priority. But it should be. Worldwide, an estimated ninety percent of the world's sewage flows untreated into oceans, rivers and lakes.

A sad footnote - a year after my tour ended, I learned that Robert McIntosh had died of a brain tumor. He was a visionary entrepreneur whose presence will be greatly missed. Without his commitment the project would not have taken off.

Q: By the time you got to Hungary, had the Mafia moved in as they did in some of the other countries to the East? I mean, the basically well connected communist political types taking over decollectivized industry and all-

ROE: Not in a significant way. The first transition government arose out of an amazing civic activism, creating new parties and institutions. Hungarians chose a moderate Christian Democratic government that steered the country through a rocky economic transition. The next administration was smoother, until they ran into the Nagymaros conflict. Prime Minister Gyula Horn had been a lower-level figure in the Communist Party before the transition. The PC changed its name and the reform wing came to the fore, although time will tell how much they changed. The deep-seated Mafia influence that exists east of the Carpathians was not present in Hungary. Russians are not terribly popular there, as you can imagine. But the drug trade, car theft rings, and gangland type shooting these have emerged in some urban areas.

Q: I'd like to put down here, we're talking about Eastern Europe and Russia. When we use the term Mafia we do not mean the Mafia of Sicily and all. It's a general term for essentially criminal elements or groups that have gotten a lot of power and are taking over industries and other levels of power.

ROE: Robert Kaplan wrote two brilliant books *Balkan Ghosts* and *Eastward to Tartar* looking at the issue of post-Communist societies in Eastern Europe and the Balkans and their relationships with organized criminal elements. A fascinating chapter of the second book deals with Hungary as a point of contrast.

The issue of organized crime was a concern for Hungarians as it was for the International Law Enforcement Academy (ILEA). The FBI is the lead agency for this Budapest-based Academy that trains police officers in crime-fighting and information-sharing techniques. Ambassador Tufo followed it closely. NGOs and academics helped to shape the curriculum - particularly those specializing in constitutional reform.

Q: Was it sort of hard for American officials to work with NGOs, or by this time had things changed considerably?

ROE: It came naturally. Ambassador Tufo had no problems working with NGOs. Of course his major focus in 1999 was the war in Kosovo. There were constant delegations from the military side, as the Taszır base in southeastern Hungary was a staging point for U.S. forces in the Balkans. I visited Taszır to learn about its environmental management program, which was considerable. We later brought officials from the Environmental Ministry.

I set up a green networking group, a salon that met bi-monthly. It included NGO leaders like Sándor Fülöp of the Environmental Management Law Association (who is now the government Ombudsman); Kalin Borissov, liaison for the EU's development office; Tibor Farago of the Environment Ministry; Jernej Stritih of the REC; Ecolinks manager Jacek Podkanski; János Vargha; industry experts and officers from like-minded Embassies. It was a lively venue for exchanging views and information about projects.

Q: How did you find Budapest during the late 90s?

ROE: Turbulent, charming, haunting, never boring. The Embassy was located on Szabadság tér (Freedom Square), just ten minutes by foot from where I lived in Pest. It's an architectural jewel that had been used as a hospital in the Renaissance period. The façade is a pale yellow. It faces a spacious pedestrian square with a giant Soviet monument to the liberation of Budapest from the Nazis. The Embassy was renovated in 1991, and seemed destined to permanent waves of subsequent renovation, for reasons that remain obscure. Dust, stress, and the sound of wasted construction dollars were the result. Behind the Chancery stands one of the most striking buildings in Budapest, the Postal Worker's Bank, an art nouveau masterpiece by József Lechner, a leading turn-of-the-century architect, with fanciful details like angels' wings and beehives and a serpentine façade of Zsolnay tiles. Every time I gazed at this magical building, I saw another amazing detail. When asked why he lavished so many resources on elements that were not easily visible, the architect reportedly said he did it "for the birds."

I lived near the Parliament building, with a view of Buda Castle across the Danube. My apartment had one bedroom and a study, high ceilings, and the slightly shabby elegance of the turn-of-the-century building where it resided. I didn't need a car. On the street behind me, café society was percolating, alternative films were shown, and an old bakery shop was a neighborhood chat centesans internet. I loved the villamos, the yellow tramcars that can take you to the Turkish baths or the opera in minutes. More often than not, I'd get a ticket to an amazing performance at the last minute. I studied harp in my spare time with Ildi Polonyi, a brilliant young musician from the Franz Liszt Academy of Music (Zeneakadémia), which was one of my temples. This was a music conservatory and concert hall, vibrant with students and filled with art nouveau frescoes and Zsolnay ceramic tiles. Ildi and her husband, an awesome violinist, kept me abreast of the best concerts and alternative venues whenever they performed.

I developed close friendships with several colleagues: Mary McKinley, REC Communications Director; Amy Modley, cultural projects liaison; Anna Vieri, a researcher at the Hungarian Academy of Sciences' Conflict Resolution Institute; REC advisor Janos Zlinsky; Claudia Spahl of the German Embassy and Laszlo Letenyi, an anthropologist who was closely involved with the Roma community. I visited the hinterlands every chance I could to hike, ride horseback, and explore Hungary's medieval towns and fabulous legacy of historic and modernist architecture. During weekend jaunts or visits from my husband Hector, my sister Becky and other friends, we explored Lake Balaton, visited the Zoltan Kodaly Institute in Kecskemet, toured Pecs, Eger, and parts of neighboring Slovakia, Poland and the Czech Republic. In 1999 my niece Riley Salyards, a senior at Carnegie-Mellon University, came for a work-study program in theatre production that exposed me to another Magyar dimension. I can't imagine anyone leaving Budapest and not missing the city, the warmth of its people, its incredible architecture and rich history.

In my free time, or occasionally on trips facilitated by the Joint S&T Fund, I visited the managers and staff of Hungary's national parks - a dedicated, inspiring group. During the Soviet occupation, many cooperated secretly with their counterparts across the border to protect fragile cross-boundary ecosystems. Some, like Dr. Csaba Aradi, Director of the Hortobagy National Park in Hungary's legendary Puszta Plains, are renowned ornithologists and ecologists.

One field trip I took to the Hortobagy in October 1997 is still with me. A park ecologist accompanied me to see the Great Bustards. Lying outstretched on the ground in by a wheat field, I saw a small group of the legendary birds strut and gabble to each other. At dusk we witnessed the migration of the common (Eurasian) cranes, which are hardly common. In the wetlands ringing the northern edge of the park, thousands of Eurasian cranes landed and rose again in strong winds, trumpeting to each other in wave after wave as they sought places to rest for the night. It was an awesome experience. I saw how fragile their migration can be: neighboring farmers want the fish ponds to be deep, but the cranes need shallow waters.

Q: During the time you were there in the 1997-99 period, what was the role of the Internet and global communications for your work with the environment, students and scientists and NGOs. This was rather booming, wasn't it?

ROE: Quite. The Internet was widely used in high schools and universities. Hungarians are proud of their inventions in high tech and math, and they are adept at global communications.

Q: Teller and Einstein and other people like that.

ROE: John von Neumann, a Hungarian-born mathematician, was considered the father of the binary code and a co-creator of game theory. Budapest sprouted Internet cafes in the early 1990s. The Joint S&T Fund staff was Internet-savvy, and the bulk of my communications with people in the government and the NGO community were by e-mail. Mine was the only Embassy office allowed to have unclassified e-mail, a small victory I wrested from the security enforcers at post. The RSO, a former police officer in N.Y.C., sided with me, saying he had much bigger problems to worry about than unclassified email in the office. Google was just being born as a search engine.

Q: Google is kind of an international search engine today. But back then-

ROE: Seven years ago, if you put a question into the search machine, you would have to go through hoops to get a shadow of an answer. The connections weren't made for lay people. You'd have to be patient and ask the question over and over, in different forms.

Q: I'm sure somebody reading this in five years from now will think we're talking about smoke signals or tom-tom communication because things are changing so rapidly.

ROE: That's so true. But in Hungary there are places that escape any categories. Perhaps that's what most impacted me - the complicated Hungarian mind, the impossibly beautiful language, a capital with dozens of historical and social layers, and towns and countryside lost in time. Once I was invited to speak at a commemorative event in the southwestern town of Nagyberény to honor Dr. Miklós Faust, a Hungarian-born horticulturist and author who headed USDA's Plant Research Division. He had accompanied the "Healthy Apple Team" during several trips the Joint Fund organized in the agricultural and wine-growing regions. Dr. Faust was a prolific author who helped innumerable researchers from his native country. His sudden death shocked the science community. His close friends, István Kajati and Edő Bőszörményi, asked me to speak in Hungarian for the ceremony. I practiced for a week, practicing my pronunciation with them during the drive to Nagyberény. But when we arrived, the schoolteachers said their students wanted me to speak in English! So I recited the first paragraph in Magyar and spoke the rest in my native tongue. The whole town turned out for the event. The outpouring of affection for this scientist who had never forgotten his roots was moving. These bonds of family and friendship enable their culture to survive and thrive.

Q: Where did you go in 1999?

ROE: I headed to Washington to join the U.S. Mission to the Organization of American States (OAS), and served there from August 1999 to July 2001.

Q: Who was the head of the OAS and could you talk about the job and issues?

ROE: When I arrived in August 1999, the U.S. Ambassador to OAS was Victor Marrero, a peerless diplomat who was finishing his tour. Before his USOAS tour, Marrero was Chairman of the New York City Planning Commission and U.S. Representative to the UN Economic and Social Commission. Four months later, he was appointed judge of the U.S. Southern District Court in the finance district of New York. I'll jump forward here a moment - In 2004, Marrero wrote a landmark decision overturning the Bush administration's Patriot Act that required U.S. telephone providers to turn over records to the government without telling customers. I spoke with him when I visited Ground Zero in New York City in the winter of 2005. Judge Marrero's office sits directly across from the place where the twin towers were struck by terrorists. He and his wife had worked for years in the World Trade Center as attorneys. They were close friends with many of those who died in the attack. I told him how proud I was of his efforts to defend the U.S. Constitution.

Ambassador Marrero departed in December 2001 for the federal bench. In February 2001 he was replaced by Luis Lauredo, a Cuban-American who had been working closely with the press associations, NGOs and trade lobbies based in Miami. The DCM of the USOAS Mission was Ron Godard, a great officer with whom I'd worked in Chile in 1988-89. Ron had urged me to take the assignment. The Secretary General of the OAS was Cesar Gaviria. When I served in Colombia, Gaviria was President of that country. Now he was entering his second term as OAS SecGen.

During my first year at USOAS there were major changes in my home life. I was weaving two marvelous new stepchildren into my life. One was Norma Andrea, who lives in Santiago. The other was Luis Felipe, who at age seven moved to our home by way of New York from Colombia. His existence was unknown to me until that time. Hector and I were in marriage counseling. The breach was large. We somehow made it through, which is fortunate because we had so many responsibilities and good memories in common. My mother learned she had cancer. She and my stepfather moved to Colorado in 1998 to be closer to my sisters. I visited them frequently, and they accepted Luis Felipe with open arms. The mission staff members who needed to know were supportive. I was fortunate to be surrounded by really good people.

Q: We have a regular embassy to the OAS, down the road from the State Department. How did that fit with your office?

ROE: Yes, the OAS is at 17th Street and Constitution, a short walk from State. It combines pre-Colombian elements in a stately Beaux-Arts style building. The cavernous lobby with its soaring palm trees, glazed Aztec tiles and Georgian marble fountain used to house parrots as well. Behind the main structure is the Museum of the Americas, another jewel that sits outside the usual gallery tour, but hosts a number of unusual exhibits.

The U.S. mission to the OAS is technically an Embassy, as are most of the other missions from the thirty-four countries that make up the OAS in North and South America. The difference is its location within the State Department. Most of the Caribbean countries also house their OAS missions within their Washington embassies. The U.S. mission has its own budget line. Its principal goals are to promote democracy, combat terrorism and drug trafficking, foster free trade and promote sustainable economic development in cooperation with the other OAS member countries.

Multilateral diplomacy in the OAS has a lot in common with work within the UN agencies. It involves steady research, relationship building, public speaking and debate. We attend a myriad of meetings, wade through mountains of documents, craft resolutions, mobilize with other countries to pass motions and shape concrete projects. At any moment we need to be prepared to step up to the microphone in a very public and often contentious setting. I managed a \$2.5 million annual democracy fund appropriated by Congress. With this fund, the U.S. is the primary financier of OAS electoral observation missions. We support a variety of reform projects, dispute resolution programs and other activities such as demining in Central America.

Q: Those would be particularly in Nicaragua and El Salvador.

ROE: For demining, yes. Also, the historic 1990 election in Nicaragua was the OAS's most robust election observation mission or EOM. Since then the OAS has mounted nearly 100 EOMs and a range of projects to facilitate election reform and help modernize civil registries and other election institutions. Many civil society and Congressional leaders had criticized the OAS for not doing more when democratic institutions were under siege, as they were in Peru in the 1990's. The OAS approved Resolution 1080 during its 1991 General Assembly in Santiago, Chile. Resolution 1080 empowered the organization to take action in crises involving a coup or overt breach of constitutional order. OAS Ambassadors Luigi Einaudi (U.S.) and Heraldo Muñoz of Chile were key actors in achieving that resolution. But there was still a gap. What about situations where democracy was subverted from within? Most observers felt this was happening in Peru during the mid to late 1990s. When I arrived at USOAS, DCM Ron Godard and WHA Assistant Secretary Peter Romero were exploring ways to go beyond 1080 in a round of meetings throughout the region. Many countries looked askance at any initiative that would be seen as a U.S.-led attempt to engage the OAS in domestic conflicts. The days of the old-style "Yankee intervention" have a long echo in the hemisphere.

A central part of my portfolio was coordinating with the OAS's Democracy Promotion Unit (UPD), which was created in 1990 at the initiative of Canada and the U.S. to defend and help spread democratic measures throughout the hemisphere. In consultation with UPD staff, I drafted a resolution to facilitate rapid response by the OAS secretary general to member states facing internal conflicts that threatened their democratic institutions. To diffuse anxiety about this mechanism, we called it a Democracy Fund and enlisted the support of ten countries - with Canada, Argentina, Uruguay, and Chile in the lead to propose it. Mexico, Peru, Ecuador and Brazil resisted, fearing an assault on the sacred notion of national sovereignty. DCM Ron Godard had led the consultations that gave rise to this initiative. He tasked me with negotiating the resolution through a working group of the Political/Juridical Committee.

Q: How did you get it through Haiti or particularly Brazil and Mexico?

ROE: You keep wordsmithing in endlessly long meetings conducted largely in Spanish. These are endurance contests to see who can stand up longer in negotiations. My right-hand ace was Margarita Riva-Geoghegan who directed the development section of USOAS. Margarita had been with the mission since well before the Einaudi years. She figured out ways for us to push through holes in the opposition's arguments and helped draft compromise text. Our nemesis was Peru. Its mission had an extremely vocal attorney, Ambassador Beatriz Ramacciotti, who served as Fujimori's personal representative. She fought tooth and nail against anything that might facilitate multilateral intervention in her country. The Argentine perm rep, Raul Ricardez, was brilliant in outmaneuvering Ramacciotti. Canadian Ambassador Peter Boehm also played a central role in this fight.

Then we had to decide what to do about the April 2000 elections in Peru. Democracy activists, human rights organizations, and many observers in the Congress and other countries were concerned that President Fujimori would do anything to win a third term in office. He had put a lock on the country's judicial system, subverted freedom of the press, and established the national intelligence service (SIN) as the real seat of power. We thought there was a chance that OAS could be more decisive than it had in any previous election. I explored options with the Director of the UPD, Elizabeth Spehar; with Gaviria's Chief of Staff, Fernando Jaramillo; and with Santiago Murray, a veteran UPD staffer. Murray was close to Roger Noriega of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, which was pushing for action. Could the OAS do something audacious enough to make a difference in monitoring the elections? Would it be willing to speak out publicly and walk away from a bad election if necessary? The tentative answer was yes. But based on past practice, UPD hands thought the Peruvian mission would have to approve any EOM report in advance. I said no way would that happen. First, because it would defeat the purpose. And second, because we were pushing the clock. The election was in three months and we couldn't afford to dither.

On January 27, a George Washington University seminar hosted by Professor Cynthia McClintock convened Peru-watchers from around the U.S. and the hemisphere. Present were Peruvian NGOs, journalists and parliamentary representatives as well as top U.S. academics and country experts. The NGOs held a closed-door meeting after the seminar. Besides McClintock and Coletta Youngers of the Washington Office on Latin America, the session included David Scott Palmer of Boston University, Abe Loewenthal of the University of California, Peruvian Congresswomen Graciela Fernandez Baca and Beatriz Merino, Sofia Macher of the Peruvian Coordinadora Nacional de Derechos Humanos, Father Felipe MacGregor and Rafael Roncagliolo of Transparencia Peru. I floated the idea for a different type of OAS mission. Could it work? Would it have credibility? The consensus was that the OAS was the only hope, with all its flaws, so this avenue must be pursued.

Our next challenge was how to get people from the Hill to talk with the principals at the OAS. That was tricky because Congressional contacts by State are strictly controlled by its legislative bureau, which is not known for thinking outside the box.

Q: Yes, "H."

ROE: So we encouraged the UPD, OAS' democracy office, to reach out to its allies on the Hill to discuss the prospect with OAS SecGen Gaviria. I was picked to represent USOA and to run the risks of getting "H" riled up. Roger Noriega of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee showed up in a rumpled overcoat, looking like a character out of the Maltese Falcon. (Roger knew the score, having spent two years in the USOAS Mission as a Schedule C advisor to then-U.S. Ambassador Luigi Einaudi. He was later named U.S. Ambassador to the OAS in August 2001.) This was my first meeting with Roger in person. He had the reputation of being highly distrustful of State, but we had a mutual friend at the mission in Margarita. We met privately with SecGen Gaviria, UPD Director Spehar and OAS Chief of Staff Jaramillo. (Prior to the meeting, I primed Jaramillo on the proposal). Gaviria strongly supported the idea of an EOM that could speak out publicly in the event of a rigged election. He agreed that the mission must be headed by a person of great prestige and indisputable credibility. However Noriega said, "We're going to need the proposal in writing for Senator Helms to look it over. He'll have to have the final word." We all said that would be a deal breaker. Roger apparently wasn't willing to close the question. I went back to confer with Ron Godard and draft the language for supporting an OAS electoral mission. Ron and I also needed to convince Luis Lauredo, the newly appointed Ambassador, that this was doable. He was very skeptical the OAS could lead in this area. Luis Lauredo arrived after the GW seminar -

Q: George Washington University

ROE: Yes, the January 27 seminar. At the outset, Ambassador Lauredo didn't realize how strongly the NGOs felt the OAS was needed to make a difference. He soon came around. So we drafted a three-page letter that conditioned U.S. financial support for an OAS EOM. This was a precedent-setting contract. Gaviria confirmed he was considering as EOM chief Eduardo Stein, the ex- foreign minister of Guatemala. Stein had negotiated that country's peace accords. He was respected by civil society, had great personal integrity and an incredible mastery of tough constitutional issues. Without spelling out his name, our letter stated that the mission must be headed by a person of great independence and credibility in the region. The mission had to be prepared to speak out as often as necessary and to pay as much attention to the pre-electoral climate and the legal and institutional framework as it would to the election procedures and activities.

As we were about to send this contract to the OAS, I faxed a copy to Roger Noriega's office. He called immediately in a fury. Ambassador Lauredo passed the call to me. Roger said, "This is outrageous. You can't do this without our approval." I said, "That wasn't the understanding - but wait a minute, have you read the letter?" It turns out he hadn't. I pointed out the key paragraphs and reminded him that "this is what we talked about with Gaviria." He said, "But you were supposed to call me." I said, "I called you so often I was afraid your office would think something funny was going on." At that point he apologized and said he didn't get the messages. (I apparently had been calling the central number not his direct line.) Roger suggested even tougher language. It was good material, but I was skeptical. Fortunately Ron Godard came up with an eloquent way to incorporate the main point.

We sent the letter to the UPD and then explored how to get Eduardo Stein on board. OAS Chief of Staff Jaramillo had told me Stein needed to be convinced. Ambassador Lauredo called him, stressing that this was a critical mission not only for OAS's credibility but for democracy in the hemisphere. The chief of mission had to have the authority to speak boldly on the issues of fairness surrounding the electoral process.

Q: Could you talk about what you saw was the threat in Peru. What did you think Fujimori was up to?

ROE: The OAS response was part of an emerging international consensus that democracy had been severely eroded in Peru, that the rule of law was giving way to a police state. Fujimori's administration intervened in the judiciary for years, to the point where its independence was seriously compromised. By 2000, more than eighty percent of the judges and prosecutors were in a provisional status. He dismantled the constitutional court. The Peruvian Congress was stripped of its oversight capacities. There was no civic control over the military or the intelligence system. As the April 2000 elections approached, Fujimori was on his way to manipulating his third term in office by destroying any effective checks and balances.

In contrast to traditional OAS observation missions, this EOM offered its criticisms and recommendations publicly and in writing. EOM director Stein identified three critical issues in consultation with the Peruvian Ombudsman's office: equitable access to open-signal TV broadcasts and paid advertising; adequate training of polling officials and workers and the provision of voter education materials in native languages; and the national electoral commission's voter computation and logistics system. The OAS Mission worked with government and non-government actors to address these problems, but given Fujimori's stance, they were insurmountable. After the first electoral round, Stein reported that the entire election process was seriously flawed. Opposition candidates had been harassed and threatened; the votes tallied greatly exceeded the numbers of those who voted; the signatures to register one of the pro-Fujimori political movements were proven to be massively forged; there was no official mechanism for investigating fraud; and citizens' political participation was repeatedly blocked.

In a momentous decision, Stein, with the backing of SecGen Gaviria, stated publicly that the elections were neither free nor fair. He pulled the EOM in protest. When the OAS took action, all the other international observation corps - the UN, National Democratic Institute, International Republican Institute, the Carter Center, the EU mission - also refused to participate. This had never occurred in such dramatic form in the international arena. Fujimori was elected without any opposition in the second, disputed round of balloting on May 28, 2000. The case then went to the OAS.

Eduardo Stein made his report to an OAS permanent council meeting in May. His meticulous account sparked a furious debate. Several Caribbean and Central American countries joined Chile, Argentina, the U.S. and Canada, stating that the OAS was right to challenge a fraudulent vote. The Peruvians lobbied ferociously, trying to block any action. Many ambassadors were acting without instructions from their capitals. They deferred the decision to the June OAS General Assembly in Windsor, Canada.

The decision to move the debate to the OASGA (General Assembly) was a de facto invocation of Resolution 1080. This was the first time that the spirit of 1080 and its sense of urgent action had been invoked in a situation that was an internal takeover of a democratic government.

Q: Where was the driving force opposed to Fujimori in the OAS, I mean what was our role and who else was with us?

ROE: The U.S., Canada, Argentina and Chile were committed to the promotion of democracy and to the concept of preventive diplomacy. The point was to strengthen the OAS's capacity to do something about crises before they'd gotten out of control. Uruguay, Paraguay, Central America and many of the smaller Caribbean countries were sympathetic to this argument. The Caribbean representatives also disliked the arrogance of the Fujimori-era Peruvian representatives, whom some perceived as practically racist. Brazil and Ecuador and especially Venezuela took Peru's side. Venezuelan Foreign Minister (and later Vice President) Jose Vicente Rangel made long tirades on the floor of the OASGA. His eyes bored holes into anyone daring to speak in favor of Eduardo Stein or propose democratic reform measures. Mexico worked with Brazil behind the scenes and on the floor to prevent a vigorous OAS response, citing concerns about intervention.

A major OAS founding principle was respect for national sovereignty. By 2000, an independent panel established at the request of UN Secretary General Kofi Anan reinterpreted the concept of sovereignty to include the principle of "do no harm." The panel, chaired by Canada, concluded that the international community has a moral obligation to act collectively to prevent genocide or the systematic destruction of human rights. That resolution, supported by Anan, states that intervention is warranted if government abuse is such that citizens have no recourse. Eduardo Stein was a member of that international panel.

We anticipated a stormy debate at the OASGA in Windsor. Late Friday night, on the eve of our departure for Windsor, I finished drafting and faxed a proposed resolution on Peru to the Canadian DCM, Renata Wielgosz. Renata and I faxed edits back and forth to each other in our deserted missions until well past midnight. The resolution we worked up that night was the basis for the one eventually adopted by the OASGA. It proposed sending Canadian Foreign Minister Lloyd Axworthy and OAS SecGen Gaviria to Peru to initiate a dialogue for broad-based reform and report back to the Permanent Council.

During the General Assembly, I suggested holding caucus meetings with the Caribbean delegation and the Central American reps. These were turning points. Raul Ricardez, the Permanent Representative for Argentina, was eloquent in convincing the caucuses to support the resolution. During the session, before responding to Ricardez' message, Ambassador Kingsley Lane (St. Vincent) said: "When a barracuda swims to shore to tell you there's a shark in the water, you'd better listen!" The Caribbean group made impassioned speeches in favor of democratic reform, along with other southern cone and Central American delegates. Venezuela, Peru and their allies still resisted. Halfway through the floor debate, Ambassador Pickering made an appearance-

Q: He was the Undersecretary-

ROE: Yes, the Undersecretary of State for political affairs. Ambassador Pickering arrived at the last minute to head our delegation. I believe he had been attending his son's college graduation. His arrival was unexpected. It created a stir in the room. Pickering took the participants off in a room and hammered out an agreement. In the end even Peru had to join in the consensus that authorized an OAS mission to address the separation of powers, electoral system reform, freedom of information and political human rights.

The "high level mission" left a month later, in July. The day before its departure, I spoke separately with Jaramillo and Wielgosz about framing the issues. They were open to suggestions. I brought Jaramillo a roadmap that Ambassador John Hamilton had prepared in consultation with civil society, independent government and opposition experts in Lima. Jaramillo and Wielgosz informally accepted it as the starting point as the OAS mission established an on-going presence in Lima.

It was rough going at first, but by August the OAS "mesa de dialogo" was well underway. The negotiators had set forth a framework for action on electoral reform, the development of an independent judiciary, a free press and civilian control of the military. Early on, they engaged the social actors: the church, business, the unions, human rights groups and the public defenders that had felt the brunt of the police state. Then came the revelation of big-time corruption and bribes involving Vladimir Montesinos, the shadowy head of Peru's intelligence service (SIN) -

Q: He was very close to Fujimori.

ROE: Montesinos had become the power behind the throne. He was tied into illegal arms sales, some involving the guerrilla army (FARC) of Colombia. (You can imagine how this infuriated Gaviria.) Montesinos was involved in torture. He was involved in paramilitary activities. When videotapes surfaced demonstrating the bribes to Montesinos, things quickly catapulted. On September 16, after a dramatic airport meeting with Gaviria, Fujimori called for early elections and said he would deactivate the SIN. Within the next two months, a national political accord was drafted with all the key national actors. It led to an amended constitution. Peruvians went to the polls on April 8 to elect Alejandro Toledo as the first indigenous president in the hemisphere. OAS mission left an unmistakable footprint. Without its presence, a peaceful transition would most likely not have been possible.

Another unforeseen outcome was an idea floated at the February '01 conference of the Community of Democracies, hosted by the OAS in Washington. Diego Garcia-Sayán, the Justice Minister of Peru's post-Fujimori, interim government, informed us he would ask that the OAS systematize the Windsor resolution and its previous democracy promotion clauses into a new declaration of political rights. He proposed a new charter for the Americas. The initiative was bold and promising. But how could it avoid being bogged down in lengthy interagency processes or in endless OAS debates?

Tom Shannon, the new DCM for USOAS, was U.S. Summit Coordinator. Shannon saw an opportunity in the Summit of the Americas which Canada was to host in the spring. Canada, the U.S., Argentina, Chile, Costa Rica and Peru began drafting texts for an OAS political charter. The April '01 Quebec Summit - with all the presidents and prime ministers in attendance - approved language instructing their foreign ministers to prepare an Inter-American Democratic Charter (IADC) to codify OAS principles and strengthen its mechanisms for acting in defense of representative democracy.

Then negotiations began in earnest on the details of the Democratic Charter. Working closely with Shannon was Marshall Brown, an inspired, dedicated attorney on loan from State's legal staff. They made the most of this unique opportunity. Several Caribbean delegations, led by Ambassador King, insisted that the IADC had not taken their social concerns sufficiently into account. The June OASGA was unable to approve the Charter. Finally the differences were worked out. With only Venezuela abstaining, the Charter was approved by the OAS in a special General Assembly in Peru on September 11, 2001.

Q: 9/11.

ROE: Yes, it coincided with the Al Qaeda attack. Secretary of State Colin Powell attended the special OASGA in Lima. When the planes hit the U.S. Trade Center, he was on the floor and had to depart, but not before taking part in the ratification of the Democratic Charter. Before the Secretary left, the OAS expressed its support for the U.S. and its outrage over the terrorist attacks.

No international organization has come as far in defining the elements of a democratic society. The IADC codifies all previous OAS actions from its formation regarding the promotion of democracy and puts them all in one slim book. Its 28 articles include the issues of press freedom, institutional checks and balances, free and fair election processes, labor rights, education for democracy, and many more. I was in the chair the day the worker rights clause was introduced by the Ambassador from Antigua, Lionel Alexander Hurst. I immediately conferred with Argentine Perm Rep Ricardez, and we agreed it was a valuable addition. Many of the articles were fought over intensely, but that one stayed without major challenge.

Q: Where was the initiative coming from? Did you feel that because of the natural suspicion of so many of these countries in Latin America that we needed to be out of the limelight as much as possible?

ROE: At that point in history, the U.S. had political credit in the bank. Still, we took pains to keep a reasonably low profile. The idea was completely Peru's. In fact, when Justice Minister García-Sayán proposed the idea in a speech at the Community of Democracies meeting at OAS, we first thought, "that's great, but good luck." The concept had been evolving over the past decade. It evolved from the formation of the UPD in 1990, a Canadian initiative, and the 1991 passage of Resolution 1080, a U.S. and Chilean initiative. The Charters of CARICOM, the trade-related organization of the Caribbean states, and of MERCOSUR (Argentina, Paraguay, Brazil and Uruguay) also included basic democracy clauses. Since the OAS General Assembly of 1999, the U.S. and its allies explored ways to improve on what was called the "Resolution 1080 mechanism" to allow the OAS to react swiftly when it saw major threats to democratic institutions and the rights of citizens. What was unusual was the very short space from the time Peru floated the idea to when it was codified in the Charter less than eight months. Now, putting the IADC fully into action will take many multiples of that time.

Q: Before we leave that, what was the situation in Venezuela that it was not on board?

ROE: President Hugo Chavez was elected as a populist at a time when the party system was breaking down in Venezuela. The country was a forerunner of democracy in the Americas, but its institutions had become ossified. Like many nations that depend on the petroleum industry, it developed serious corruption and huge social-economic disparities. After his election, Chavez moved to curtail political rights and to cripple independent unions and business organizations. He set out to establish a state that would resemble that of Cuba more than other country in the hemisphere. Venezuela by no means wanted to see the OAS intervene to help people in Peru gain more space and liberty. So the Venezuelan diplomats vigorously opposed any action by the OAS and did their best to filibuster the Democracy Charter. In the end they abstained from the final resolution.

Q: Were there other issues you addressed during that assignment?

ROE: I was involved in an intense inter-agency debate over the issue of expanding opportunities and political participation for native Americans. Indigenous peoples number an estimated 50 million in the Americas. In many countries - Guatemala, Peru, Bolivia and Paraguayanative Americans constitute a majority. Historically they've been marginalized and exploited. But during recent years indigenous movements have emerged to reshape the political equation. For more than a decade the OAS sought to negotiate a declaration of indigenous rights for the Americas, a parallel effort to the international negotiations in the UN. Oddly, the U.S. positioned itself as the rear guard of that debate by sticking to a legalistic definition of the term "peoples." From the start of talks, the Department of Interior and the Justice Department locked horns with the State Department on this issue. Interior and Justice argued for a more open interpretation that would harmonize our domestic and international policies. U.S. domestic law recognizes the inherent right of Native American tribes to a distinct sovereign status that is incorporated into our constitutional framework. The Congress has also consistently supported tribal rights to self-government. But at State an evangelically inspired attorney in "L," Mike Dennis, monopolized this issue, resisting like Custer any change in the Department's position. He argued that recognizing self-determination could adversely impact other sensitive international issues including the Palestinian conflict.

We began consulting with counterparts in Interior and Justice, with senior OAS experts, with the Democracy, Rights and Labor division of State, with Canada, Guatemala and Peru, and with representatives of U.S. tribal organizations. As a result, State developed consensus language that was adopted by the Quebec City Summit of the Americas. The decision concerning OAS negotiations went up the ladder to the White House, and the National Security Council finally brokered a presidential directive issued in January 2001, in the midnight hours of the Clinton administration. The White House directive said that self-determination could be regarded as an internal right without necessary implications for international self-determination; with that context being clearly defined, the term "peoples" could be used.

I drafted the U.S. statement for OAS Deputy Chief of Mission Tom Shannon, who played a pivotal behind the scenes role throughout the White House negotiations. The change in U.S. position came like a lightning bolt at the indigenous negotiations in April 2001. It helped move the talks forward. The diehard elements in State's legal division mounted a major back-channel fight. But the Bush White House basically ratified the decision made by the Clinton administration. This was an important signal that the U.S. wanted to help strengthen the voices of indigenous communities and engage them in a more productive dialogue with their own governments.

A number of countries including Peru, Colombia, Venezuela, Honduras, Guatemala, and Panama approved constitutions that recognized indigenous people's traditional forms of social organization, their rights to local sovereignty. Many indigenous representatives had been elected to parliaments. But too often their communities have encountered neglect, frustration, and confrontation in dealing with national governments. After centuries of our own sorry history, the U.S. practice has become one of the more advanced in the hemisphere. We wanted to use this experience to focus on the education, resources and best practices that could make a difference in the hemisphere. For example, the Canadians had begun working with tribes in Ecuador on issues such as sustainable logging, development of natural gas resources and environmental enterprises.

Q: You were there from when to when? Were there other issues you wanted to mention?

ROE: I was in USOAS from 1999 to 2001. We had an exceptionally creative and dedicated staff: Jean Preston, Richard Miles and later Mary Stickles in the political section. Retired FSOs Jim Todd and Jerry Hoganson brought phenomenal institutional memory, energy and insights to these initiatives. With their help we were able to tackle a range of related issues from human rights and the creation of an OAS Rapporteur for Press Freedom to cooperation on sustainable development, demining and terrorism. During the Windsor OASGA former U.S. Ambassador Luigi Einaudi won a contested election for OAS Assistant Secretary General by an impressive margin. In 2000 Jerry Hoganson worked to gain Senate ratification of the landmark Inter-American Convention against Corruption that had been signed by the U.S. and 22 other OAS members in 1996, well before similar conventions were approved by the OECD and the UN. Richard Miles and Marshall Brown from "L" then worked with our OAS interlocutors to develop a multilateral evaluation mechanism for the convention.

Based on the successful OAS experience in Peru, we recommended that the Congress increase its support for the Mission's Democracy Fund from \$2.5 to \$3.5 million. Eventually, this increase won Hill support. During my last six months I explored ways to revive the OAS anti-terrorism committee (CICTE). CICTE was created in October 1999 but had received scant support from State's own counter-terrorism division (S/CT). In January 2001, S/CT informed us they wanted to pull the plug. I set up talks with Argentina, Uruguay, Mexico, Granada and other interested countries. Finding broad support, we pushed back, got S/CT to name an interim chair, and included a clause supporting CICTE in the Quebec City Summit Plan of Action. We held a planning session in July, and S/CT approved \$100,000 for a training conference just before the Special OASGA on September 11, 2001. After the attack on the twin towers, CICTE had its work cut out.

Following that assignment I went to the Policy Planning office in WHA (the Western Hemisphere bureau) to be Senior Labor Advisor. I worked with USAID and OAS on support for political party training. I focused on the intersection of trade and labor issues, a major focus of the Summits of the Americas. In the fall of '01 I joined the U.S. inter-agency team for negotiating free trade agreements with Chile and Central America.

Q: You were there from when to when in Policy Planning?

ROE: From August 2001 to October 2004.

Q: So that was basically when you retired.

ROE: That was my last full-time assignment with State, though I've worked part-time since my retirement. PPC had a terrific staff over the years. I worked with several directors and deputies there including Paul Trivelli, Linda Jewell, Greg Sprow, Jim Wagner, Julieta Noyes, and Jim Benson.

Q: Now the labor part of your job. You know my experience in interviewing goes way back particularly in the 1960s or so. American labor was strong in the United States and also had very strong partners in the Latin American labor movement. By this time did you feel a fire had gone out?

ROE: The old fires are embers now, although some new sparks are out there. Job outsourcing, structural workforce changes, and a hostile political climate contributed to a huge erosion of union membership in recent decades. As millions of manufacturing jobs dissolved, many communities lost the stable economic backbone that was their working class base. Large corporations have invested heavily in legalized union busting. Under the Reagan, Bush I and II administrations these activities won a Presidential seal. The economic pendulum has swung towards Wall Street and the business elite. Financial services have gained the lion's share of the economy. This comes with a high price. The U.S. is more and more dependent on foreign imports and foreign infusions of capital. Working people's buying power has declined, and the gap between rich and poor has grown exponentially. Americans' perception that the economy's rewards aren't fairly distributed has whipped up a potent backlash against trade liberalization.

In the political arena, unions still pack more clout than their numbers would indicate. New organizations like "9 to 5" have organized free-lance employees, clerical workers and household employees in a number of cities. Unions and workplace associations emerged as significant forces for democratic change in Poland, South Africa, Brazil, China and Cuba. Unions help deconcentrate power. At their best, they train citizens in techniques to build open political systems. What U.S. steelworkers leader John L. Lewis said in the 1930s is still true: the power to contract, to have a voice in determining the conditions under which one works, is the difference between free labor and serfdom.

The rights of workers as codified in the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the 1998 Declaration by the ILO known as labor rule of law emerged as an important U.S. foreign policy consideration. Since the mid-1980s, Congress passed nearly two dozen pieces of legislation linking respect for internationally-recognized worker rights to public investment and trade policy. These were the central planks for the General System of Preferences (GSP) and the Caribbean and Andean Trade Policy Acts. The Overseas Private Investment Corporation (OPIC) by law must ensure that the foreign investment projects it supports protect internationally recognized worker rights. During the 1990s the Labor Department and the ILO developed programs to train worker rights monitors, improve health and safety practices, and combat child labor in developing countries. Under pressure from NGOs, U.S. business like Reeboks developed voluntary codes

Q: Shoe manufacturers.

ROE: Shoe and clothing manufacturers faced fire when university students mounted boycotts saying they were neglecting worker rights. So Reeboks, the Gap, Levi Brothers and other firms tightened their labor standards enforcement abroad to ensure that the cost of producing their footwear and clothes abroad would not be a race to the bottom -

Q: If I've got to do it, everybody's got to do it.

ROE: Yes, they wanted a clean bill of labor rights so that they could hold their heads up and also to counter unfair competition. So the private sector began to support monitoring groups and work with coalitions like the Fair Labor Association.

Q: Let's recap your latest assignment.

ROE: In 2001 I became senior labor advisor in the policy planning office of WHA (Western Hemisphere bureau). I advised the front office and the desks on trade-related labor standards, indigenous rights, political party assistance and specific policy issues for example, how the Administration should approach President Lula of Brazil, taking his experience as a labor and democracy movement leader into account. I was liaison with the Washington office of ILO, and with U.S. labor, private sector and civil society organizations on trade and worker rights issues. I took part in interagency efforts to monitor trade agreements with respect to implementation of labor clauses and in a National Academy of Sciences effort to develop baselines for monitoring compliance with core labor standards. I joined the negotiating team for the U.S.-Chile Free Trade Agreement and for the trade pacts the U.S. signed with the Central American countries. We were exploring ways to include enforceable labor clauses like those in the U.S.-Jordan trade agreement, and taking the initial steps to extend them to Peru and Colombia. It was a lively portfolio.

Q: Well, let me ask you what are the problems in the Western hemisphere from your perspective or from the labor point of view?

ROE: Latin America is a dynamic region that has made tremendous progress in popular sovereignty, economic development and fiscal management. Still, in certain countries economic reforms went only halfway, leaving major barriers to entrepreneurship and innovation. The potential for more sustainable development remains very large. Many of the region's citizens are struggling for ways to share in the growing prosperity. This directly affects the U.S. The majority of our immigrants come from south of the border. Economic distress and lack of opportunities drive them here, along with the lure of jobs.

With some glaring exceptions, free and fair elections have become the norm. Among the big challenges are the need to create jobs, broad-based education, responsive police and health systems and the fight against child labor, child soldiers, and transnational criminal organizations. The spread of globalization accentuated problems of socio-economic exclusion, especially for poor farmers, indigenous and Afro-Hispanic communities. Those living in Mexico, Central America and the Andean countries are concerned their manufacturing jobs will be pulled away to China and Southeast Asia. Labor and occupational standards are poorly enforced. Workers who organize face huge obstacles. Bribes, blacklists and bureaucracy hinder development in too many places.

On the U.S. side, we're seeing growing scrutiny by Congress and civil society organizations concerning workplace conditions south of the border. U.S. trade agendas include not only rules for commerce in agricultural and industrial goods but also provisions for intellectual property, investments, transparency, environmental and labor standards, and dispute settlement. Inter-agency negotiating teams work in each of these areas. Once concluded, the agreements require countries to devote significant resources to these standards. For example, in the case of Ecuador, USTR made improvements in labor rights a precondition for beginning FTA talks. Labor was a make-or-break issue for the accords we negotiated with Chile and Central American countries, because the margin for Congressional passage was razor-thin at best.

The Dymel case in Guatemala is a case in point. It involved OPIC, WHA, the Democracy, Rights and Labor (DRL) Bureau, the U.S. Embassy in Guatemala, the Guatemalan government, a large U.S. electric and construction company.

Q: Dymel being what?

ROE: A construction firm then located in Guatemala. OPIC had provided multi-million dollars in investment support to Tampa Electric Company (TECO) to build and operate a coal-fired power plant in Guatemala. TECO used a Kellogg, Brown & Root subsidiary as its engineering, procurement and construction (EPC) contractor. The EPC contractor then subcontracted much of the construction work to Dymel, which was owned by an El Salvadoran citizen and his partnership. Numerous labor violations occurred during the project's construction phase. A group of 150 workers formed a union after their warnings about safety hazards weren't heeded, and a worker was electrocuted causing his death. In response, they filed an organizing petition and along the way became knowledgeable on labor law, even though none had previously been part of a union organizing campaign. Despite tremendous pressure from management, about 72 workers continued to pursue the petition. Dymel fired them all with the apparent knowledge of the Brown & Root subsidiary and TECO's Guatemalan staff. The workers won five court cases recognizing their trade union rights courts that were upheld by Guatemala's Supreme Court, but Dymel's owners closed shop and moved back to El Salvador. Despite the court rulings, none of the workers were rehired at the plant.

OPIC financing triggered our engagement. OPIC must enforce strict labor and environmental standards on their projects. We wanted a remedy for the workers, who were demonstrating every day in front of Guatemalan government offices, often with anti-American signs. The Department, the U.S. Embassy, and Guatemalan officials shared concerns about the vulnerable position of the trade package in Congress. At first we didn't suspect that U.S. corporate actors were involved in violating worker rights. Initially, we were nudging the government of Guatemala to implement its own labor laws. Sandra Polaski, the special representative for labor in DRL, spearheaded these efforts together with OPIC environmental and labor officer Greg Maggio; Marc Garfinkel, OPIC Vice President, and the legal staff of OPIC. As Sandra was departing State to head the trade department at the Carnegie Endowment, I took her place on this project. I co-chaired with OPIC two fact-finding missions to Guatemala in close cooperation with Ambassador Hamilton, labor attaché Erik Hall, and COVERCO, a Guatemalan human rights NGO. Our team engaged the top levels of the Guatemalan government including the vice president, the foreign minister, the trade minister, the economy minister, and the labor minister. The Guatemalan officials were concerned about the issue of cross-boundary law enforcement. They formed an inter-agency task force to pass labor reform legislation and tighten their own lax enforcement.

Along the way, lengthy testimony that Greg Maggio took from the Dymel workers revealed that officers of the U.S. EPC contractor were directly implicated. I took part in these interviews, which were detailed, credible and very disturbing. Back in Washington, the dialogue got intense. At one point the legal counsel for Kellogg, Brown & Root asked for my take on the situation as he was about to go into a board meeting. OPIC had made it clear they risked being debarred from any future U.S. government contracts if a solution was not found. I said the charges were serious and well-founded, that we had direct knowledge of labor law violations, and that they had better clean up their act. In October 2002, OPIC negotiated a 1.12 million dollar settlement with the EPC contractor, whose intermediate parties in Guatemala paid it directly to the workers. However, the story did not end happily. Even after the favorable court rulings and financial settlement, Guatemalan power and construction employers continued to blacklist the Dymel workers. Although the employers denied doing this, the practice continued.

Q: Now, the transnational thing. Was this something you were able to get at or at least begin to set up something to go after people who move around?

ROE: We proposed language for the labor section of the trade agreement to address this issue, but it didn't get inter-agency support. Our proposals for enforceable labor standards met a similar fate. USTR cited resistance by key Congressional committee leaders. These are reciprocal agreements. If the U.S. can press other countries to raise their labor standards, we are subject to the same pressure and many conservatives on the Hill don't want to see that happen. Despite that resistance, enforceable labor standards were incorporated into the free trade agreement for Peru. Other provisions that improve the dispute rules and strengthen transparency were accepted. Because CAFTA (the Central American Free Trade Agreement) is a multi-country agreement, it puts the players on notice to address festering problems. Any issue not solved at the informal level goes to dispute settlement. There's a fairly tight timeline. If no solution is found, a fine is levied and those resources are specifically to be used to remedy the problem. If the problem isn't resolved in the end, there is a cutoff of trade. But there's no guarantee.

Q: How did we look upon Mexico at the time? I imagine this country as being our closest neighbor and almost our biggest trading partner.

ROE: Mexico was the first to have a tri-party trade agreement with the U.S. and Canada involving labor standards. A number of cases came up through NAFTA regarding labor rights violations, and some complaints were brought against the U.S. concerning the social benefits and rights of migrant workers. But NAFTA lacks teeth on environmental and labor issues. Its dispute settlement process can drag out for years. The U.S. Congress did not want to replicate this model.

Under other NAFTA provisions, the U.S. Department of Labor has worked cooperatively with Mexico to address common labor concerns with Mexico. During the past few years, experts from both countries collaborated to modernize the labor justice system and implement tougher occupational safety and health standards in the workplace. We also saw the first independent trade unions organized in Mexico with assistance from the same university-based coalitions that are pressing for fair trade. These fledgling organizations have yet to develop as nationwide trade unions. They are still in the shadows.

Public concern is focused on the growing criminal activity linked to the drug cartels and the seedier side of labor relations, the gruesome, unsolved killings of young female workers in the border towns, the poor housing conditions around the maquiladoras that operate there, the lack of decent services and infrastructure. NAFTA was an unfulfilled opportunity to mobilize resources to improve the lives and environment for Mexicans and their U.S. neighbors. Post 9/11, the focus has shifted to immigration and the need to secure our borders. But putting up walls won't fix the problem. Any effective policy will have to address this issue cooperatively, not simply as an enforcement matter, but also as a social phenomenon arising from economic ills that reach across the border.

Q: Now the Assistant Secretary at the time was Roger Noriega?

ROE: In 2001, Roger Noriega was U.S. Ambassador to OAS. When I came to PPC, Peter Romero was Assistant Secretary. He was replaced by Otto Reich. When Congress didn't approve his nomination, Reich remained one year in an interim appointment and then Roger Noriega became A/S.

Q: Do you know what the problem was for Reich?

ROE: The issue was his past involvement in the Contras issue. Reich was Ambassador to Venezuela under President Reagan, and before that he'd been a hardball player in the Central American conflict. He had many enemies on the Hill. To the limited extent we came in contact, Reich was attentive to the socio-economic issues in my area. His mother had been active in the Communications Workers Union in Cuba. Reich told me his master's thesis was on labor rights. He was direct and unbureaucratic in his approach. Like Noriega he brought in many conservative political appointees.

Q: How about when Noriega came in? Had he also been rather controversial?

ROE: Roger was a combative figure when he worked for Senator Jesse Helms on the Hill. That was a time of escalating political warfare between the Democrats and the Republicans. Senators Dodd and Helms and their staff harbored enmities on the order of the Hatfields and the McCoys, and Helms broadcasted his disdain for the State Department, the UN and most international organizations. When he was on the Hill, Noriega took credit for blocking numerous Department nominees for ambassador on ideological grounds. That created bad blood.

As U.S. Ambassador to the OAS, Noriega was in his element, much more so than when he later served as Assistant Secretary. Roger knew the OAS, sensed its potential and was instrumental on the Hill in facilitating Senate consent for the Inter-American Convention on Corruption in record time. He called me directly when the vote took place. I appreciated this, as the convention had been a USOAS priority for some time. I sat in on staff meetings when he was Mission director. Roger had a collegial style and a droll sense of humor. He engaged actively in the OAS. He advocated democratic freedom for Cuba in a way that raised eyebrows, but may have bolstered efforts by the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights to spotlight the issue.

In a separate effort following the 2003 arrests of dozens of independent trade union activists, writers and journalists in Havana, I worked closely with Robert Hagen from the U.S. Mission in Geneva, the National Endowment for Democracy's Latin American Director Chris Sabatini, Tony Freeman (former DAS in State and then Washington Director of ILO) and Stan Gacek of the AFL-CIO to get high-level attention from the ILO. In June 2003, for the first time in a decade, the ILO governing body issued a report sharply criticizing the Cuban government for systematic and deep-going violations of international labor standards. What seemed like a natural step was preceded by months of letter-writing, testimony and behind the scenes lobbying. That was a small but gratifying victory.

A more influential Administration figure was Ambassador Robert Zoellick, the U.S. trade representative - and briefly Deputy Secretary of State under Condoleezza Rice. In the field, USTR has a reputation of imposing its will and being heavy-handed. But in Central America and Chile, I saw Zoellick thoroughly engaged, showing finesse and understanding of the labor rights issue. Zoellick worked closely with USTR's labor advisor, William (Bud) Clatanoff. Clatanoff, a former U.S. labor counselor in Japan, is a curmudgeon who plays his cards very close to the chest. But he knows his stuff. We had a strong inter-agency group where USTR, DOL, and State hammered out negotiating positions and monitored labor and worker rights developments in key countries. Whenever Ambassador Zoellick visited a country, he worked to advance this agenda.

Q: And you had this job through what period?

ROE: From 2001 to 2004.

Q: Was there a growth of anti-Americanism during this period? It was happening in Europe and certainly in the Middle East.

ROE: There was a global mushrooming of anti-American sentiment. Much of the increase was associated with U.S. policies and attitudes. Most foreigners clearly distinguish their feelings toward Americans from their attitudes toward the U.S. government. The 9/11 attacks of 2001 generated great sympathy for the U.S. in this hemisphere and throughout the world. Even Cuba and Iran briefly offered to cooperate with our counter-terrorism efforts. That wave of support dissipated when the U.S. invaded Iraq without clear cause or UN support. The Administration's unilateralism created lasting scars in the region. We bullied our allies, including those like Chile and Mexico who sought to forge a compromise agreement on the issue. The motto was "follow us or else." As the U.S. became bogged down in regime change in the Middle East, our allies had the perception that we were abandoning the development agenda, turning from our own democratic principles, and even losing our basic competence. The Argentine meltdown coincided with the crisis of U.S. credibility.

Q: The situation in Argentina was an economic crisis.

ROE: Right. It effectively removed an important U.S. ally from the arena. You had the rise of Hugo Chavez who tried to make himself into the little Fidel of Venezuela while using oil resources to pump up his friends in the Hemisphere. Chavez used the pretext of the failed 2003 coup to shut down opposing voices in Caracas. Bolivia experienced a popular revolt. President Siles de Lozada stepped down at gunpoint. There's fertile breeding ground for leaders like Evo Morales and Chavez, who are throwbacks to the caudillo era. The region is still in the throes of far-reaching change. The Andean countries have spurred decentralization and experienced a surge of once-marginalized groups, yet most have not consolidated their democratic institutions. In Bolivia, for example, more than 500 indigenous mayors were elected in the past several years, during a time of political fragmentation and economic crisis. Now there are 30 to 50 political parties where there used to be two or three. Where there's stark poverty, where governments have been unable to improve people's standard of living or meet basic needs, demagogues step in.

The U.S. lost a great deal of moral authority within the last few years. The xenophobic tone of our domestic debate on immigration generated more ill will. But the desire for cooperation remains strong, and in areas like counter-terrorism and cross-border law enforcement, our relationships have strengthened.

Q: Well, we've come to the end. Do you want to add a summary?

ROE: I came to the foreign service after many years of involvement in efforts to advance free trade unions, human rights and natural resource protection. The same values respect for the rights of others without borders - animated my years with the State Department. No question, I would have been more comfortable working with the exuberant band of eccentrics who flocked to the Office of Strategic Services (OSS) in the 1940s than I was with the process-oriented Foreign Service bureaucracy of the 1980s through the turn of the century. Interpersonal diplomacy is, for me, the essence of representing our country. I don't see it as limited to the diplomatic profession. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice called this work "transformational diplomacy." But it's been going on at least since post World War II days, when State Department officers, labor activists and humanitarian experts went to workplaces and town halls and refugee camps to help Europeans rebuild their civil society and political institutions.

That perspective illuminated my career as a foreign service officer. My assignments took me outside the office and the normal bureaucratic incubators. I grabbed the opportunities that arose to work with people from all walks of life, to learn from their situations and cooperate in removing walls of misunderstanding and abuse. Some of these efforts came to nothing, but others bore amazing fruit. One lesson I take away is that what counts most is not the ideas you bring, but how you build relationships and give witness. The Spanish language talks of "carino," which means open-hearted, heartfelt. I learned that the smallest, mindful efforts can strike a chord and have long-lasting reverberations in people's lives. It happened in Bolivia during the trek to rescue hostages at the Chicote Grande mine, during the labor blockades of La Paz and the engagement with students of Siglo XX and Catavi.

Pinochet's dirty war made me initially wary about taking an assignment in Chile. Once there, I saw a new reality emerge as people made audacious choices that turned history around. The ordinary citizens and emerging political and civic leaders who spurred the democratic revolution showed me the human spirit at its best. I was glad for the modest, improbable part I played in ensuring that the 1988 plebiscite was not stolen. The country's democratic leadership succeeded beyond their expectations, building democracy and reconciliation out of decades of suffering.

In Israel I took on a sticky issue Histadrut-Palestinian dialoguand inched it forward, in the space before the longest intifada. Citizens in the EU, Israel and Colombia have lived with the threat of terror for decades. We have a lot to learn from them. I remember seeing photos of John F. Kennedy in the homes of Arab citizens, both Muslim and Christian, in Israel, very much like those you see in small shops and altars in Hispanic America. They viewed the U.S. as the champion of fair play and the rule of law. Most people in the Middle East are more like us than not. They want a better life for their children. They want to build, not destroy. The rhetoric of a clash of civilizations doesn't help us understand Islamic fundamentalism. It rather helps the Bin Ladens and those like Mugabe and Milosevic who invest in paranoia and ethnic hatred.

Hungary taught me how effectively science and technology programs can promote the values of open societies. I enjoyed traveling the back roads with scientists who had few resources but big ideas about environmentally sustainable farming, climate change action, species protection and subatomic particle collisions. I'm convinced these ideas are wellsprings for the innovative, greener industries of the future. With a tiny USAID investment and support from the REC, I helped start a project for alternative wastewater treatment that cloned successfully in Eastern and Southeastern Europe. During the debate over the Gabčíkovo dam, I refocused the Embassy on an environmental issue whose tentacles sprung from the days of non-violent resistance to Communist rule.

Working on environmental assessment with respect to the Rio Grande bridges and Bio Bio dams reminded me how closely woven are our foreign policy and domestic issues. The settlement won through OPIC for struggling workers in Guatemala was an advance, though it pales in comparison to the ongoing blacklist. I'm proudest of my role in making the 2000 Stein OAS mission possible. That electoral observation mission and the subsequent OAS dialogue in Lima helped open doors for a host of other unforeseen developments, from a peaceful, democratic revolution in Peru to the Inter-American Democratic Charter.

It pains me to see how the foreign service was decimated in recent years. The militarization of diplomacy; the slashing of development aid and of S&T programs; the disengagement from multilateral efforts to counter global warming and prevent biological terrorism; the disestablishment of the U.S. Information Agency; the gutting of verifiable, legally binding arms control agreements; the detainee mistreatment in Guantanamo Bay; and effective non-recognition of the Geneva convention - these policies harmed our standing and integrity. Ours is the only country whose founding document calls for a "decent respect for the opinions of mankind." When the U.S. government strays from that core, everyone loses.

I see the pushback from federal courts and the rise in civic consciousness as harbingers of a major shift. The Foreign Service has a lot to offer those who want to serve our country and reinvigorate our international relations. The bureaucracy is nothing easy, and the foreign assistance budget will in all likelihood continue to be subject to severe pressures. But working abroad you have a chance to develop more open systems. You meet people on an equal footing in their language and culture. Those willing to take the dusty roads will find exciting ways to engage with citizens and governments to strengthen our common interests, advance global issues and make the planet a healthier, more equitable place. Camus said it well: "If you walk beside me I may not choose to follow. If you walk behind me I may not choose to lead. Walk beside me and we can be friends."

End of interview